



3/6

Panther

The Life and Ideas of the Marquis de Sade

GEOFFREY GORER

sadism (sad'izm)—after
Count de Sade (1740-1801)
abnormal pleasure in
cruelty; **sadist** *n* & *adj*;
sadistic (sa-dis'tik); **sadist**

The outrageousness of some of de Sade's works and the two notorious scandals in which he was involved as a young man have given rise to his infamous reputation.

He was without a doubt a highly original and even extraordinary thinker. In THE LIFE AND IDEAS OF THE MARQUIS DE SADE

Geoffrey Gorer has delved deep to present a succinct account of de Sade's strange life (one of the strangest ever lived) and has succeeded brilliantly in capturing the spirit of the man who has become the symbol of pleasure in pain.

'There is no better introduction to de Sade'
NEW STATESMAN

'The best introduction for the general reader'
TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

*By the Marquis de Sade
in Panther Books*

Quartet

Geoffrey Gorer

The Life and
Ideas of the
Marquis de Sade

A Panther Book

**The Life and Ideas of
the Marquis de Sade**

A Panther Book

***First Published in Great Britain
by Peter Owen Limited 1934***

***This edition, revised and enlarged by the author,
published in Panther Books 1964, 1967***

Copyright © Geoffrey Gorer 1962, 1963

***This book is sold subject to the
condition that it shall not, by way
of trade or otherwise, be lent,
re-sold, hired out or otherwise
circulated without the publisher's
prior consent in any form of binding
or cover other than that in which
it is published and without a similar
condition including this condition
being imposed on the subsequent
purchaser.***

***Printed in Great Britain by Cox & Wyman Ltd.,
London, Reading and Fakenham, and published
by Panther Books Ltd.,
1-3 Upper James St., London, W.1***

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
SOME PRELIMINARY JUDGMENTS	15
1 LIFE (1740-1814)	21
2 LITERARY WORK	62
I <i>Literary principles</i>	
II <i>Miscellaneous works</i>	
III <i>Aline et Valcour</i>	
IV <i>'Les 120 Journées', 'Justine' and 'Juliette'</i>	
V <i>Literary influence</i>	
3 PHILOSOPHY	84
I <i>La Mettrie</i>	
II <i>General principles</i>	
4 GOD AND NATURE	93
5 POLITICS I - DIAGNOSIS	100
I <i>Class Divisions</i>	
II <i>Nature of Property</i>	
III <i>The ruling classes - Their policies and mechanisms</i>	
IV <i>Their relation to the poor - The poor</i>	
V <i>Law and Justice - Prison - The death penalty</i>	
VI <i>Other Considerations</i>	
VII <i>Butua - A parable of civilization</i>	
6 POLITICS II - SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS	117
I <i>Utopia 1788</i>	
II <i>Plan for a European Federation, 1788</i>	

III *Anarchy 1794?*

**IV *Plan of legislation for the new
republic 1795***

7	SEX, PLEASURE AND LOVE	144
8	SADISM AND ALGOLAGNIA	155
9	THIRTY YEARS AFTER	173
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	193
	REFERENCES	197

**The Life and Ideas
of the
Marquis de Sade**

Introduction

I

THIS study of the life and ideas of the Marquis de Sade was planned in the spring, and written in the summer and autumn of 1933: my reason for undertaking this work sprang directly from the fact that the Nazi movement had just got into power by popular vote in Germany. In the first reports which were received of this monstrous régime the word 'sadism' was constantly used to describe the cruelty and destruction in which it indulged; and I thought it would be interesting to discover what were the links between the original ideas of the Marquis de Sade and the cruel and callous practices reported from Germany and, to a lesser degree, from Mussolini's Italy. For this reason this first edition placed a major emphasis on the political aspect of de Sade's life and writings; and numerous parallels were drawn between the actions and sayings of de Sade's characters and those of various Nazi and Fascist politicians, and some public figures and events in Great Britain and the United States.

The books which I had to guide me, besides de Sade's own writings were:

(1) Prefaces and articles by Maurice Heine, often introducing newly discovered and published texts: now reprinted, with an introduction by Gilbert Lely under the title *Le Marquis de Sade*: Maurice Heine (Paris, Gallimard 1950)

(2) 'Eugène Dühren' (Ivan Bloch). *Der Marquis de Sade und seine Zeit: Le Marquis de Sade et son temps* (Berlin, Harsdorf 1901, in French and German); *Neue Forschungen über dem Marquis de Sade* (Harsdorf 1904, German only)

(3) Guillaume Apollinaire. *L'Oeuvre du Marquis de Sade* (Paris. Bibliothèque des Curieux: Collection Les Maîtres d'Amour 1909)

(4) C. R. Dawes. *The Marquis de Sade* (London. Holden 1927)

(5) Dr. Octave Béliard. *Le Marquis de Sade* (Paris. Editions du Laurier 1928)

(6) Otto Flake. *Marquis de Sade* (Berlin. S. Fischer Verlag 1930)

(7) Paul Bourdin. *Correspondance inédite du Marquis de Sade* (Paris. Librairie de France 1929)

(8) Paul Ginisty: *La Marquise de Sade* (Paris 1901)

The works of Béliard and Flake (5) and (6) are almost completely worthless; but all the others contain a certain amount of original information about de Sade's life, the correspondence edited by Paul

Bourdin (7) being particularly valuable; and almost all have accounts and views of various length and various interest of his major works.

In 1952 an English publisher, Peter Owen, decided to reprint my book, and I revised it accordingly. I took out practically all the political references which, after the lapse of twenty years, had become so distant in most people's minds that they would have needed quite elaborate historical footnotes to be understandable. I rechecked most of the translated quotations – re-reading in the process some of de Sade's writings for the first time since I had finished my book in 1933 – and, with the diminishment of prudery on the part of English publishers, was able to extend quite a number of them. I removed a few psychological formulations which seemed to me untenable; and wrote a new final chapter to re-assess de Sade and the concept of Sadism in the light of my learning and experience over twenty years. The only new text which I had to guide me in preparing this edition was:

(9) Jean Desbordes: *Le Vrai Visage du Marquis de Sade* (Paris. Nouvelle Revue Critique 1939)

This study contained in whole or in part sixty hitherto unpublished documents of major importance in elucidating the life of the Marquis de Sade.

It was only when this edition was in page proof that a friend called my attention to:

(10) Gilbert Lely ed.: *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle ...* (Paris. Georges Artigues 1949)

This was the first publication made by Gilbert Lely of the enormously rich fund of letters and manuscripts made available to him by de Sade's descendant, Le Marquis Xavier de Sade, and consisted of a long documented preface and twenty-two quite remarkable personal letters. This was only a foretaste of what was to come; but it was sufficient to demonstrate that everything that I, and all my predecessors, had written on the life of the Marquis de Sade was inaccurate and incomplete in a number of respects. I had seen this too late to be able to do more than add a four-page postscript to the English edition which appeared in 1953.

In the following five years Gilbert Lely published the greater part of these new archives under the following titles:

(11) *Histoire Secrète d'Isabelle de Bavière* (Paris. Gallimard 1953)

(12) *Le Carillon de Vincennes* (Paris. 'Arcanes' 1953)

(13) *Cahiers personnels (1803–1804)* (Paris. Corréa 1953)

(14) *Monsieur Le 6. Lettres inédites (1778–1784)* (Paris. Juillard 1954)

All these, and a great deal more unpublished material, were utilized in a masterly fashion in:

(15) Gilbert Lely: *Vie du Marquis de Sade*. Two volumes. (Paris. Gallimard 1952, 1957)

As far as the facts of the life of the Marquis de Sade are concerned, this biography of Lely's is absolutely definitive. Nothing which has been written before, save for a few articles by Maurice Heine, has any validity unless confirmed by Lely, who has examined, as far as is possible, every original document. These 1200 closely printed, rigorously documented pages represent a biography of the greatest merit. One can – I occasionally do – differ from him in the interpretation he makes of the facts; but fact and comment are so scrupulously separated in his pages that this detracts not at all from the unique value of his work.

The existence of this masterpiece of documentation caused me considerable perplexity when the present edition was mooted. I could not bear to republish the existing chapter on de Sade's life knowing as I did that it was full of inaccuracies and omissions; the same is true of all the nine sources previously quoted. The thought of making a summary of Lely's book did not appeal to me. I thought at one time of simply taking the chapter out, and referring readers to Lely's work; but not everybody would have the time, the wish, or the opportunity to give so much attention to de Sade's life; and I thought that it was necessary to have the main facts of de Sade's life available so as to place his work and his ideas in their historical context.

The solution I have adopted is as follows: I have completely rewritten this chapter, checking every fact to the best of my ability against Lely's documentation; but I have preserved the original form and emphases, including the autobiographical quotations from de Sade's fictional works which were, at the time of writing, the most original aspect of this chapter. As far as I can manage it, this chapter does not now contain any inaccuracies; but it is inevitably only a pale reflection of the enormous richness of documentation which Lely has made available.

The new material which Gilbert Lely has made available has also necessitated rewriting section (II) of the second chapter; and the rewritten final chapter also takes into account this new data. The remainder of the book has been corrected, but does not differ significantly from the 1952 English edition.

II

When I was a book-collecting undergraduate I found copies of *Aline et Valcour* and *Juliette* on the open shelves of booksellers in Cambridge and London. They were respectable booksellers, the books were relatively cheap, and I bought them out of curiosity. On first dipping into *Juliette*, I found only the boring and nauseous perversity that I had been led to expect; but *Aline et Valcour* (which,

on account of its lack of obscenity, had been almost completely neglected by people writing on de Sade) seemed to me so full of pregnant ideas and novel insights that I returned to *Juliette* with new eyes. I then found that, if the obscenity can be, not overlooked, but taken in one's stride, a view of the world was presented of great originality and curious force.

In the following years Maurice Heine was editing and publishing a number of de Sade's unpublished manuscripts; I subscribed to these and bought them as they came out. But my attempts to acquire the remainder of his published books met with little success. From most booksellers a demand for his works produced an ignorant stare, or violent indignation, or the leering offer of the kind of pornographic works of which de Sade wrote: 'These miserable little volumes compiled in cafés or brothels demonstrate simultaneously two voids in their authors - their heads and their stomachs are equally empty.'¹*

I should never have been able to complete the documentation for this work, but for the great kindness of Mr. C. R. Dawes, whose book on de Sade was, within its self-imposed limits, the best hitherto published (it contains much the best summary of *Justine et Juliette*); in response to an appeal from a complete stranger, he put his magnificent library and his great knowledge at my disposal with a kindness for which I can find no adequate thanks. It is a pleasure to think that my boldness in approaching him has been rewarded by a friendship which has lasted to this day.

The principal originality which can still be claimed for this book is that it is the only one in any language which allows the general reader to judge de Sade by his own words. To as great an extent as possible, I have quoted him verbatim; and to avoid making a bilingual book I have translated him into English, paying more attention to the accuracy than to the elegance of the translation. The quotations have involved me in awkward code of dots; de Sade frequently employs . . . three dots, for his own effects; so I have been driven to use four dots . . . to indicate the omission of a word or words within a sentence, and five dots . . . to indicate the omission of complete sentences.

The chief pitfall of which I have been conscious is the danger of picking out phrases and sentences which suit my purpose, and distorting them out of their context. To guard against doing this, or the suspicion of having done so, I have made some long and

* For the sake of tidiness, I have placed all the indications of the source of my quotations at the end of the book. I have also placed at the end of the book a list of the editions of de Sade's works which I have used, so that the curious or the sceptical can, if they wish, check the translations. This is not intended to be in any sense a full bibliography; this can be found in Apollinaire (3) or Dawes (4). Lely (15) gives first publications only, but is absolutely complete.

uninterrupted quotations, of which perhaps the whole is not apposite to the matter discussed, but which illustrate the tendencies of the passage.

When I first contemplated this book I thought in my ignorance of history that it would be possible to say definitely whether or no de Sade was the first to enounce such ideas as the theory of the optimum population or of equal rights for men and women; but I soon abandoned this attempt, and have contented myself with exposing his ideas and leaving to those who are more learned than I the vexed question of priority. His originality in the domain of sexual psycho-pathology is of course unquestioned.

This book was – I suppose, still is – open to attack from two sources: from those who consider such a monster better buried in oblivion, and who will find in the ideas I have assembled but further proofs of his monstrosity; and from that smaller group who will consider that any attempt to rationalize and render understandable the arch-criminal and arch-rebel is akin to blasphemy. To such possible detractors I will reply in the words de Sade used in the preface to *Aline et Valcour*:

‘Nevertheless, we will have critics, contradictors and enemies without a doubt:

It is a danger to love men,
A crime to enlighten them.

‘So much the worse for those who will condemn this work, and will not feel in what spirit it has been written: slaves of prejudice and habit, they show that they are swayed solely by opinion, and the torch of philosophy will never shine for them.’²

August, 1962

G. G.

NOTE – A certain amount of the material in Chapter IX ‘Thirty Years After’ appeared in *Encounter*, No 103, April 1962, in a somewhat different form and context.

Some Preliminary Judgments

.... *Le MONSTRE-AUTEUR* ...

— RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE, 1797

Readers acquainted with the Justine and Juliette of the Marquis de Sade will comprehend my horror and indignation at the style of amusement these dens afforded. The volumes referred to (the most blasphemous and obscene ever painted and which came hot from hell soon after the date of this letter) are filled with the records of experiments tried for the purpose of exciting by every species of torture the most unheard of debaucheries.

— W. BECKFORD

Note added to a letter written in 1784. (It may be noted that de Sade had published nothing at this date.)

Cet atroce et sanglant blasphémateur, cet obscène historien des plus formidables rêveries qui aient jamais agité la fièvre des démons, le Marquis de Sade. Croyez-moi, qui que vous soyez, ne touchez pas à ces livres, ce serait tuer de vos mains le sommeil, le doux sommeil ...

— J. JANIN, 1834

Ce frénétique et abominable assemblage de tous les crimes et de toutes les saletés.

— F. SOULIÉ, 1837

De Sade — une des gloires de la France — un martyr.

— P. BOREL, 1839

J'oserais affirmer, sans crainte d'être démenti, que Byron et de Sade (je demande pardon du rapprochement) ont peut-être été les deux plus grands inspirateurs de nos modernes, l'un affiché et visible, l'autre clandestin — pas trop clandestin.

— SAINT-BEUVE, 1843

That illustrious and ill-requited benefactor of humanity.

Usually the work is either a stimulant for an old beast or an emetic for a young man, instead of a valuable study to rational curiosity.

I only regret that in justly attacking my atheism you have wilfully misrepresented the source. I should have bowed to the judicial sentence if instead of 'Byron with a difference' you had said 'De Sade with a difference.' The poet, thinker, and man of the world from

*whom the theology of my poem is derived was a greater than Byron.
He indeed fatalist or not, saw to the bottom of gods and men.*

*Did he lie? did he laugh? does he know it?
Now he lies out of reach, out of breath,
Thy prophet, thy preacher, thy poet? ...*

— A. C. SWINBURNE
(between 1860 and 1880)

*Il faut toujours en revenir à de Sade, c'est-à-dire à l'homme naturel,
pour expliquer le mal.*

— C. BAUDELAIRE
Journaux Intimes

*Flaubert, une intelligence hantée par de Sade.
Causerie sur de Sade, auquel il revient toujours.*

— *Journal des GONCOURTS*

*The Marquis de Sade is perhaps one of the most extraordinary
men who ever lived and a very interesting subject for a psycho-
logical study; Nature has produced some strange abortions, both
physical and mental, but probably never a greater mental mon-
strosity than de Sade.*

— PISANUS FRAXI (H. S. ASHBEE)
1880

*Le Marquis de Sade fut l'homme indiqué pour synthétiser et pou-
ser jusques à ses derniers limites l'art de la spermocratie anormale et
monstrueuse. Il dépassa dans ce genre toute l'antiquité il fixa dans
un monde d'horreurs les colonnes d'Hercule des démentes priapées.
Jamais heureusement on n'ira désormais aussi loin, de Sade aura
borné l'horizon du champ érotique.*

— OCTAVE UZANNE, 1901

*C'est le 2 juin, 1740 qui vit naître un des hommes les plus remar-
quables du dixhuitième siècle, disons même de l'humanité en
général. ... Les Œuvres du Marquis de Sade constituent un objet
de l'histoire et de la civilisation autant que de la science médicale ...
Il y a encore un autre point de vue qui fait des ouvrages du Marquis
de Sade pour l'historien qui s'occupe de la civilisation, pour le
médecin, le jurisconsulte, l'économiste et le moraliste un véritable
puits de science et de notions nouvelles.*

— EUGÈNE DÜHREN (IVAN BLOCH)
1901, 1904

*Cet homme qui parut ne compter pour rien durant tout le dixneu-
vième siècle, pourrait, bien dominer le vingtième. ... Le Marquis
de Sade, l'esprit le plus libre qui ait encore existé. ... Le lecteur qui
aborde ces romans ne remarque souvent que la lettre, qui est dégou-
tante, et l'analyse ci-dessous n'en peut malheureusement pas livrer
l'esprit.*

— G. APOLLINAIRE, 1909

Sade, D. A. F., French licentious writer . . .

— *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 13th Edition

De Sade wrote according to his lights and though his ideas were extravagant he was at least sincere. It is just that, perhaps, which makes him such a sinister figure. Mere obscenity is always disgusting and nearly always dull; but there was much more than that here and he was savagely in earnest.

— C. R. DAWES, 1927

Je n'arrive pas à le prendre au sérieux.

— P. BOURDIN, 1929

Un écrivain qu'il faut placer sans doute parmi les plus grands.

— J. PAULHAN, 1930

Il y a donc lieu de croire que Sade, après avoir inquiété tout un siècle qui ne pouvait le lire, sera de plus en plus lu pour remédier à l'inquiétude du suivant.

— M. HEINE, 1930

Dello scrittore — non diciamo poi dello scrittore di genio — mancano al Sade le qualità più elementari. Poligrafo e pornografo a maggior titolo d'un Aretino, tutto il suo merito sta nell' aver lasciato dei documenti che rappresentano la fase mitologica infantile della psicopatologia; in forma fiabesca egli dà la prima sistematologia delle perversioni.

— MARIO PRAZ, 1930

Hier also, wenn irgendwo, ist Sade unnormale, defekt. Statt der Spannung liegt Spaltung vor und zwar eine Spaltung die nicht mit Dammerzuständen und Störungen des Bewusstseins verbunden ist. Er weicht dem Konflikt aus, verantwortet sich nicht vor sich selbst und empfindet nie die Notwendigkeit, sich zu ordnen. . . . Wie man mit dieser doppelten Buchführung ein genialer Mensch wird zeigt Kierkegaard: wie ein negativer von armer nutzloser Tragik: Sade.

— O. FLAKE, 1930

Rien en saurait plus tenir à l'écart de cette voix inouïe ceux qui sont capables de l'entendre et ne méconnaîtront jamais le sens profond de sa révélation.

— M. HEINE, 1931

The Life
and Ideas of the
MARQUIS DE SADE

*I care not whether a man is Good or Evil; all that I care
Is whether he is a Wise man or a Fool.*

- W. BLAKE
Jerusalem

Life (1740 - 1814)

Si les hommes, en entrant dans la vie, savaient les peines qui les attendent: qu'il ne dépendit que d'eux de rentrer dans le néant, en serait-il un seul qui voulût remplir la carrière.

- DE SADE

Aline et Valcour

The Bastille trembles

And the den named Horror held a man
Chained hand and foot: round his neck an iron band, bound to
the impregnable wall:

In his soul was the serpent coil'd round his heart, hid from the
light, as in a cleft rock,

And the man was confined for a writing prophetic.

- W. BLAKE

The French Revolution

'CONNECTED by my mother with the highest in the land; by my father with all that was most distinguished in Languedoc; born in Paris in the midst of luxury and abundance, I believed as soon as I could think that nature and fortune had joined together to cover me with gifts. I believed this because people had been foolish enough to say so to me and this absurd prejudice made me haughty, despotic, and quick to anger; it seemed to me that the whole world should give way to my caprices and that it was only necessary to form them for them to be satisfied. I will give you one example from my childhood to convince you of the dangerous principles that were so idiotically allowed to grow in me.

'Born and brought up in the palace of the illustrious prince (a connection of my mother's) of nearly my age,* I was encouraged to be with him as much as possible, so that my childhood friend should be useful to me all my life; but my vanity at the time, which didn't understand anything of this calculation, took offence one day in our childish games because he wanted to take something away from me, and more especially because, doubtless with great reason, he thought his rank entitled him to do it; I revenged myself by many reiterated blows, without any consideration stopping me; only force and violence could separate me from my adversary.

* In real life, Prince Louis-Joseph de Bourbon, who was four years older than de Sade.

'At about that time my father was engaged in diplomatic negotiations; my mother went with him and I was sent to my grandmother in Languedoc whose too blind kindness encouraged in me all the faults I have mentioned.

'I returned to Paris to go to school, under the guidance of a firm and intelligent man, doubtless most suitable to shape my youth, but whom unfortunately I did not stay with for long. War broke out. My parents, in a hurry for me to serve, did not complete my education; and I joined my regiment at an age when I should naturally have been going to school.

'.... The campaigns opened and I venture to say I did well. The natural impetuosity of my character, the fiery soul I had received from nature, only added further force and activity to that ferocious virtue called courage, doubtless incorrectly considered the only one necessary for a soldier.

'When our regiment was crushed in the penultimate campaign of that war we were sent back to barracks in Normandy; from there my misfortunes began.

'I was just twenty-one: till then entirely occupied with the work of war, I had neither known my heart nor realized that it was sensitive. [He describes the seduction and abandonment of a young girl of good family, the usual custom of the mess.]

'My father called me to Paris that winter and I hurried to him: his health was failing, and he wished to see me settled before he died; this project and the pleasures of the town diverted me. I spent two years in different pleasures.'¹

This is the account Valcour, the hero, gives of himself at the beginning of the novel *Aline et Valcour*; the details have nothing to do with the plot and correspond so entirely with what we know of de Sade that it is justifiable to treat them as autobiographical.

The Marquis de Sade was born on the 2nd of June 1740, in the house of the great Prince Condé, who was a fairly near relation of his mother, born Marie-Eléonore de Maillé de Carman, and so connected with the Bourbons. His father was the Comte de Sade, Seigneur de Saumane et de la Coste, Lieutenant-général of the provinces of Bresse, Bugey, Valromey and Gex, maréchal de camp des armées du roi. The family, whose title of nobility dated from the first years of the twelfth century, was one of the most important of Provence. One of de Sade's direct ancestors was Hugues de Sade husband of the Laura who inspired Petrarch's delicate and platonic sonnets. It is more than usually pointed irony that the representatives of the two extremes of sexual imagination should be so directly joined.

It would appear that the Comte de Sade was almost a stereotype of a grand seigneur, cold, restrained, very formal. He had a fairly successful career as soldier and diplomatist, but seems to have been both lazy and extravagant, and when he died left little behind him save inalienable land and debts. His six surviving brothers and

sisters were, with a single exception, ecclesiastics. Madame, his wife, seems to have been extremely indolent; she may have accompanied her husband when he was ambassador in St. Petersburg and London; but most of her life was spent separated from him in a private apartment in the house of her grand relations and subsequently in a convent. She seems to have had nothing to do with the Marquis de Sade after his earliest childhood.

Typical of her treatment of her only son and only surviving child (one daughter was born before him but died at the age of two, and a second, born six years later, did not long survive) was the muddle attending his christening. She sent two servants to represent the godparents, with instructions that he was to be named Louis-Donatien-Aldonse. Aldonse was an uncommon family name from Provence; the servants changed it to Alphonse. They forgot the name Louis and substituted that of his father François. So de Sade was legally christened Donatien-Alphonse-François. He used these initials, D.A.F., on two of his published books, but seems to have been called Louis most frequently. This muddle about his Christian names caused him considerable inconvenience and danger during the later years of the Republic, when one version of his name was inscribed on a list of émigrés.

At the age of four, de Sade may have spent some little time with his grandmother at Avignon; but all that is certain is that he was given into the care of his uncle, the Abbé François de Sade who had, at that date, withdrawn from the fashionable life of Paris to devote himself to the study of Petrarch at Ebreuil. The Abbé's researches on the family poet are said to be still useful to students. The Abbé's sexual life was notoriously irregular; he hardly bothered to disguise the fact that he had a mother and daughter as contemporary mistresses, living permanently at his château at Saumane. He may well have served as a major model for the lustful ecclesiastics who play so conspicuous a part in de Sade's novels.

When he was ten years old, in 1750, de Sade returned to Paris in the care of another tutor, the Abbé Amblet, to go (presumably as a day-boy) to the Jesuit college of Louis-le-Grand, at that time the most highly reputed in Paris. Nothing is known of his four years at this school; he doesn't figure on any of the lists of prizewinners. The school was well known for its theatrical performances; there is no proof that de Sade took part in any of them, but the theatre played such a preponderant role in all his later life that Gilbert Lely, his biographer, has thought it worth while listing all the plays performed during the years that he was a pupil.

At the age of fourteen he was sent to his regiment, at the outbreak of the seven years' war with Germany. He served all through the campaign, starting as a pupil in the cavalry school of the Light Horse, and becoming captain of the Burgundy Horse at the age of nineteen. He may have been in Germany and Holland. Even as a young soldier he seems to have been continually in hot water; his

earliest surviving letters contain promises to abstain from debauchery and gambling in the future.

Very little is known of the two years between his leaving the army and his marriage. His reputation was already bad, at least in the eyes of his father, who seems to have wanted to marry him off to rid himself of responsibility, as well as to secure a dowry for him. At that time de Sade wanted to marry for love a certain Mademoiselle de Lauris, who had become his mistress (and incidentally apparently infected him with gonorrhea); but her father was against the match, and de Sade suspected that she did not want to leave Paris for a life in Provence. Nevertheless, he seems to have considered himself formally betrothed to her at the same time as his father arranged his betrothal to Claude Renée Cordier de Launay, the eldest daughter of Monsieur de Montreuil, Président de la Cour des Aides, Seigneur de Launay, Echauffour et autres lieux.

The marriage was a *mésalliance*, for the de Sades were long-established aristocrats and, through Madame la Comtesse, connected with royalty; and the Montreuils were nobodies, their land and titles just bought. Their fortune came through legal transactions; they were an outstanding example of the rise of the 'robino-cracie', the preponderance of lawyers in the last decades of the *ancien régime*. The Président (the title was honorific) seems to have been a cypher; he was almost entirely eclipsed by his wife, who managed the affairs of her family and of everyone with whom she came in contact with an energy, an unscrupulousness, and a zeal which command a certain admiration. She was extremely influential at the Court and she possessed a charm which de Sade averred she must have got from the devil. She had a very strong family pride, and excused her most inexcusable actions by pointing to family interests.

It was presumably the gratification of this pride which induced her to carry through the marriage with de Sade, for this marriage would connect her with royalty. Even before the marriage was solemnized she seems to have taken a dislike to her future son-in-law, perhaps on account of his general reputation and also because she learned of his projected marriage with Mademoiselle de Lauris. Madame de Montreuil seems to have been one of the very few women of whom we have record who resisted de Sade's great charm for the sex. In subsequent years she became his greatest enemy.

She purchased the noble blood relatively cheaply. Renée's dowry in cash was not very great; but there were great expectations of future inheritance, and Madame de Montreuil's influence at Court was also valuable. Yielding to financial calculations and family pressure, de Sade married Renée on May 17th, 1763, in circumstances of the greatest pomp, in the presence of the King and Queen and most of the higher members of the Court.

Marriage seems to have made very little difference in de Sade's life, save for providing him with more money and more powerful

protection at Court; for the next five years he lived a life of scandalous debauchery, and seems to have spent very little time voluntarily with his wife whom he found 'too puritanical and too cold' for his taste. There may have been a few weeks of honeymoon at the Montreuil's house at Echauffour in Normandy; but by October he was back in Paris, and two weeks later was arrested for acts of 'scandalous debauchery' and imprisoned in Vincennes. There are no details of this scandal, but it is likely that there was flagellation of prostitutes in one of the 'petites maisons' which de Sade hired for erotic purposes. The practice was common in the period, but de Sade seems to have been excessive in renting five or six in the space of five years; in 1764 the police-inspector Marais noted that he had firmly advised the brothel-keeper, la Brissaut, not to provide him with girls to go with him to his 'little house', though he had not given her any explanations.

When de Sade was arrested in the autumn of 1763, he wrote a long letter to M. de Sartine, the police lieutenant, which is one of the earliest pieces of writing we have from him; in view of future developments it is worth quoting at some length.

'Unhappy as I am here, sir,' the letter goes, 'I do not complain. I deserved the vengeance of God and feel it: to bemoan my sins and weep over my faults are my only employ. Alas, God could have annihilated me without giving me time to repent: what thanks must I give Him for allowing me to return to the fold. Sir, I pray you to allow me the means to accomplish this by permitting me to see a priest. Through his good offices and my own sincere repentance I hope soon to be fit to approach the holy Sacraments, whose complete neglect was the first cause of my fall. . . .

'I hope also that you will be good enough to refrain from telling my family of the true reason of my imprisonment: I would be utterly destroyed in their estimation.

'I venture to remark also that I was married on the 17th of May and assure you that I only set foot in that house in June. Then I went to the country for three months. . . . However short may have been the period of my sins, I am none the less guilty: it has been long enough to enrage the Supreme Being whose just anger I now feel.'

The prison governor noted on the letter that a priest had been sent to him.

This first brush with the law had very minor direct consequences. After two weeks' imprisonment, he was relegated to Echauffour in the charge of Madame de Montreuil, and forbidden to return to Paris for twelve months. During the winter of 1763 to 1764 he was in Normandy with his wife (she seems to have become pregnant but lost her baby either before or shortly after birth that winter) and her younger sister, Anne-Prospère, called Mademoiselle de Launay.

There are undocumented traditions that de Sade was in love with Mademoiselle de Launay even before he married her elder sister; and

local traditions at Echauffour state that he was already sleeping with her during this winter of exile from Paris. As will be shown later, he did elope with her subsequently.

De Sade did not live out his year of exile from Paris. In April he got permission to spend three months in the capital, and in September the order was completely revoked. Part of the time he was travelling about: in April he acted in amateur theatricals at Evry at the house of his wife's uncle, and composed the epilogue; in May he presented himself to the *parlement* of Burgundy in his role of lieutenant-general for the king for the provinces of Bresse, Bugey, Valromey and Gex. He was still nominally in the army (he did not retire until the age of thirty-one in 1771); but neither public nor private duties seem to have interfered with his search for pleasure.

Thanks chiefly to the researches of M. Lely, we now know the names of a number of his mistresses between 1764 and 1768 – chiefly minor actresses and subordinate dancers; he paid court to one well-born woman whom, he averred, he would like to have been free to marry; and he had a long and very stormy liaison with one of the notorious courtesans of the period, La Beauvoisin.

In 1765 he took La Beauvoisin with him to his château at La Coste, and apparently introduced her to the neighbouring gentry, whom he entertained, either as his wife or as a close relation of hers. While she was there, he started making expensive and elaborate alterations to the château, including the transforming of suitable rooms into a fully equipped amateur theatre. At one of the theatrical evenings, his uncle, the Abbé de Sade, received the guests with his nephew and La Beauvoisin.

The Abbé seems to have acted as the head of the de Sade family of his generation, as far as anybody did so; Madame de Montreuil was in constant communication with him about his nephew, her son-in-law, completely ignoring the Comte de Sade (who died in 1767), just as the Abbé seems to have paid no attention to Monsieur de Montreuil.

De Sade continued his public liaison with La Beauvoisin for a year, getting ever more deeply into debt; he seems to have got quite a lot of money out of her by promising to pay her an annuity on her capital (there is no evidence that he ever paid her a penny) they broke up with a bitter quarrel; but two years later they were together again at Lyons. She seems to have fascinated him; and she does not seem to have been jealous.

After the Comte de Sade's death, D.A.F. de Sade technically took his title, and is so named in some official documents; but it appears that in the Sade family it was the custom for alternate generations to use the titles of *Comte* and *Marquis*; and while the use of titles continued, D.A.F. was almost always known as the Marquis de Sade.

In 1767, the year in which his elder son was born, his police

reputation was already bad; in October of that year a police-inspector notes 'We shall soon be hearing again of the horrors of the Comte de Sade.' On Easter day of the following year the 'Keller affair' occurred, with enormous public scandal, and de Sade's bad reputation was fixed for ever.

Although this episode was decisive in fixing de Sade's reputation as a wicked man (as opposed to his reputation as a wicked writer), the story which held sway for nearly two centuries is inaccurate in a great many respects. The public story stems almost entirely from two letters written at the time by the Marquise de Deffand to Horace Walpole, retailing the latest scandal; she chose the most sensational items to send to England, and these were founded on the stories of two hysterical women. The actual facts were unearthed by Maurice Heine,* who traced the verbatim dispositions of all the principal witnesses in the case, from the widow Keller or Kellair to de Sade himself, and also all the relevant legal documents. The story is still not an edifying one; but it seems a very slender foundation for a 'monster' legend.

At nine o'clock on Easter morning, 1768, in the Place Sainte Victoire in Paris, de Sade, dressed in grey riding coat, wearing a hunting knife and an 'off-white' muff, and carrying a walking stick, was asked for alms by a thirty-six-year-old Alsatian woman, the widow of a baker called Valentin, known as Rose Keller. He told her she could earn some money if she came out to his 'little house' in Arcueil, and took her to wait for an hour in an unfurnished room in his town house, before taking her off in a carriage to Arcueil. Even at this point their stories are in disagreement. De Sade said that he told her quite openly that she was to come out to Arcueil for a 'partie de libertinage'; Rose Keller said that he offered her a post as housekeeper. This sounds in itself unlikely; surely French noblemen did not choose their housekeepers in such a fashion.

When they reached Arcueil, de Sade took Rose Keller into the house through a garden door and left her some time in an empty room. He then took her into a second room, where he treated her in a way she did not like; he took her back to the first room and provided her with water and towels, and a cold meal which he brought her himself; and he promised to send her back to Paris in the evening. After she had eaten, Rose Keller became more frightened than she had been earlier, got out of the window with the help of a couple of sheets, and climbed over the garden wall by hanging on to the trellis. De Sade's faithful valet, Langlois (de Sade was paying him an annuity a generation later) saw her and ran after her, offering her money from a full purse; she refused it and went on her way. She asked some village women for help, and they took her to the house

* First published in *Les Annales de Médecine légale*. No 5. June 1933. The documents are reprinted in their entirety in *Le Marquis de Sade* by Maurice Heine, edited by Gilbert Lely (Gallimard 1950) and *Vie du Marquis de Sade* Volume I (Gallimard 1952), by Gilbert Lely.

of Madame Jouette, the wife of the local lawyer and the chief lady of the village. Madame Jouette allowed her to sleep in the stables, after having 'come over faint' when Rose Keller started to tell her sad story; but the next morning she was up bright and early to hear all the details. In English or American law Madame Jouette's evidence would have been completely valueless, since she was merely repeating hearsay about facts of which she had no direct knowledge; but it is Madame Jouette's account of what she said Rose Keller told her which has been the chief source of our knowledge of this incident for nearly two centuries. This sensitive and modest lady puts far more gory and blasphemous details in her deposition than does the actual victim.

According to these ladies (and it is more or less their version that Madame du Deffand retailed) Rose Keller is a virtuous widow who thinks all the time she is being hired as a housekeeper and who is forced by the most gruesome threats to allow her modesty to be outraged. According to their stories, she was forced to undress, tied to a bed face downwards, gagged with a bolster, mercilessly beaten several times with whips and sticks, cut about with a knife in numerous places, and had hot sealing wax dropped on her wounds. When she begged her torturer not to kill her, because she had not made her Easter confession, he said that she could confess herself to him, and tried to force her to do so; and it was only after more pathetic and sacred appeals that he let her go, grinding his teeth, and emitting loud cries; he took her back to the garden room, where he provided her with water and towels and an ointment, the colour of brandy, to rub on her wounds; he said this would take all the pain away, but it stung badly when applied. He then brought her the cold collation already referred to and locked her again in the room. According to Madame Jouette, he threatened to kill her with his hunting knife and to bury her in the garden; but Rose Keller herself omits these details.

The local surgeon was called in the same evening that these tortures were alleged to have taken place, but could not make a very thorough examination since the sufferer would not undress; but he made a complete examination the next day, and found no traces of cuts or bonds, though Madame Keller's back was badly scarred and there were small superficial circular skin abrasions. The surgeon's report is consistent with a fairly severe beating with a *martinet** with knotted cords, which de Sade said he had used on a willing victim. De Sade claimed that Rose Keller knew what was to take place, undressed willingly, and was not tied down (therefore no marks of bonds); if she had screamed she would have been heard by other people in the house and by passers-by in the street; he stopped as soon as she asked him to; and he gave her an ointment of his own invention, made on a basis of Spanish wax, to rub on the sore places.

* *Larousse* defines a *martinet* as a sort of whip with several cords which is used for beating clothes or furniture, or for punishing children.

De Sade was under arrest and trying to make the best of the situation when he gave this account of what had passed; but it is far more consistent with the medical evidence and with probability than the Keller-Jouette versions. A woman so badly wounded would surely have had some difficulty in climbing walls.

Three days after his arrest, de Sade's wife and mother-in-law, who had been informed, dispatched his old tutor, Abbé Amblet, to hush up the scandal and persuade Rose Keller to withdraw the complaint, whatever the cost. After a little bargaining, Rose Keller agreed to accept 2,400 livres as 'heart-balm'. This was an enormous sum for the period and the offence; de Sade subsequently argued that the public knowledge of this huge payment encouraged other women to make complaints, in the hope of securing similar gains. Under ordinary circumstances, the case would have been closed when the complaint was withdrawn. De Sade, who had been under arrest, first at Saumur and then at the prison of Pierre-Encise at Lyons should have been released on bail, and the rest should have been formalities.

Instead, the scandal grew enormously. The magistrates threw themselves with enormous gusto on to the case, with an enthusiasm which needs explaining. They made sure that it received the maximum publicity; although it was known to them that de Sade was in prison in Lyons, they had the public town-criers of Paris call for his apprehension. There are two possible explanations for this publicity: de Sade may have been used as a scapegoat, for the populace was angry that even more flagrant misbehaviour went unpunished from people nearer the throne; and secondly that de Sade was a pawn in the rivalry between his father-in-law and his fellow justices, especially the chief justice Président de Maupéou and a Monsieur Pinon, in whose area the village of Arcueil was included. In a humorous story which de Sade wrote nearly twenty years later about this personal enemy² he makes one of the characters say: 'Recall to the memory of the Parisian judges that famous adventure of 1769 [*sic*] when their hearts, far more moved to pity by the whipped bottom of a streetwoman than by the common people, whose fathers they style themselves and whom nevertheless they let die of hunger, determined them to accuse a young officer who on his return from the sacrifice of the best years of his life in the service of his king found his only laurels in the humiliation prepared for him by the greatest enemies of the country he had been defending.'

The prosecution continued: to escape the possible penalties de Sade (with the aide of Madame de Montreuil) appealed to His Majesty Louis XV for a 'letter of abolition' – a royal licence amnestying a man of noble birth for crimes which might entail the death penalty – and His Majesty granted this and fixed the seal of his approval on the pedigree (going back to the twelfth century) which was submitted as proof of nobility. Armed with this weapon he got his acquittal from the Grande Chambre in June, but was forbidden

to live in Paris in future. He was returned to prison in Lyons and stayed there under a lettre de cachet for six months; his wife Renée worked hard for him, living in Lyons and having frequent interviews with him; and in November de Sade was allowed to leave with her to live at La Coste, but was forbidden to stop in any large towns.

However we may judge the offence today, there is no doubt that de Sade was in very considerable peril for some weeks. It is possible that the fact that he whipped the widow on Easter afternoon added to the heinousness of his offence in the eyes of the judiciary, as it certainly did in those of his censorious contemporaries. He escaped almost scot free, thanks to the wealth and influence at Court of the de Montreuil.

De Sade obeyed the court order to the extent that, for the next four years, he spent more time at La Coste than anywhere else; and for quite a lot of the time his wife was with him. His second son, Donatien-Claude-Armand was born in June 1769, and his daughter Marie-Laure in April 1771. But a lot of the time Madame de Sade was in Paris, trying to raise money, for the de Sades were terribly in debt; during her absence the Marquis increased this indebtedness by entertaining the neighbourhood with balls and amateur theatricals. In the spring of 1769 he was allowed back to the neighbourhood of Paris to receive expert medical treatment for his hemorrhoids; in the autumn he made a tour of the Low Countries, of which he wrote a description (thus far unpublished). The following year he returned to active service, as Captain of the Dragoons, for a short time, and was apparently rebuffed and insulted by his commanding officer. The following year he retired from the army with the rank of Mestre de Camp (the equivalent of Colonel) and sold his commission for a good sum. Later in 1771 he spent a week in a debtors' prison.

In the autumn of 1771 his sister-in-law, the canoness Anne-Prospère de Launay, left her convent to make her home with the de Sades and their children. She seems to have lived there continuously until she joined de Sade in his flight to Italy in the summer of 1772, making herself useful in the household (lists of de Sade's linen in her handwriting survive), appearing in amateur theatricals with her sister and brother-in-law both at La Coste and in other places, and flirting with the Abbé de Sade, the Marquis' uncle and quasi-guardian, who presented her with a riding horse, and seems to have completely succumbed to her charm.

There seems little question that de Sade was deeply in love with her – the poignant emotions expressed by the autobiographical hero of *Aline et Valcour* are not merely literary – and that this love was reciprocated; but it is very unclear when she became his mistress. The most likely supposition is that this occurred during her stay at La Coste in 1771; but there were earlier opportunities. No breath of either public or private scandal has survived prior to the public elopement in 1772.

The beginning of the year 1772 opens with what seems a cosy picture of elegant domesticity. In January the Marquis sent a pressing invitation to a Monsieur Girard inviting him to come to see a second performance of a comedy he had written, and requesting a frank criticism of his work. This obsession with the theatre, the desire to be esteemed as an actor and playwright, is a constant theme in Sade's life; in later years he was connected with the theatre as author, actor and producer; he found in it on different occasions relaxation, friendship, love, and even a means of subsistence.

The second major scandal in de Sade's life – the so-called 'affair of the poisoned sweets' – took place on June 27th, 1772. Until 1933 the truth about this affair had been completely unknown, and the accounts given were monstrously distorted and exaggerated. Maurice Heine recovered copies of the original indictments and of the depositions of the witnesses and published them for the first time in the first number of the review *Hippocrate** (March 1933), which should be consulted for the full details.

At the end of June, de Sade went to Marseilles with the ostensible purpose of dealing with some business affairs and seeing some actors. He was accompanied by his manservant Armand, nicknamed Latour, a tall pock-marked man with long hair, dressed in a sailor-like costume. Latour went round the town to make arrangements for his master's amusements, and arranged that a woman called Marguerite Coste should receive him on the Friday evening; but she did not keep her appointment and was subsequently visited on the Saturday evening.

For the Saturday morning he arranged an orgy with four prostitutes in their early twenties, and brought them to a newer and more discreet part of the town, since the brothel was too public. De Sade was smartly dressed and wearing a sword; but he chose to be addressed as La Fleur, and called Latour Monsieur le Marquis. The girls were received both singly and in groups by de Sade and his valet, lightly beaten with a besom broom which he sent out for, and were then asked by de Sade to beat him in turn. He took out of his pocket a whip made of parchment, studded with big and little nails, and stained with blood; but the girls couldn't bear to use it, and so he was beaten with the twig broom, receiving from the four girls and the manservant no less than eight hundred strokes, if the score he kept on the wall be no exaggeration. He also bedded with the girls, at one moment treating one of the girls as his valet treated him – a sight which so 'suffocated' one of the onlookers that she burst into tears and stared out of the window. He offered these girls some sweetmeats from a crystal box; one ate a few and suffered very shortly from stomach pains; the others threw theirs away. It seems almost certain that these sweets were home-made confections of

* All the documents have been reprinted twice: in Maurice Heine. *Le Marquis de Sade* edited by Gilbert Lely (Gallimard 1950); and *Vie du Marquis de Sade: Tome premier* by Gilbert Lely (Gallimard 1952).

aniseed and cantharides, the aniseed being intended to act as a carminative and the cantharides as an aphrodisiac; the proportion of cantharides, which is highly irritant, was much too high.

The visit to Marguerite Coste in the evening seems to have been sexually simple; but she ate nearly the whole boxful of the sweets and was badly ill with vomiting and diarrhoea for some days.

With the exception of what can be deduced from the Keller affair, this is the only known account of de Sade's actual sexual behaviour. Too much weight cannot be placed on the evidence of his behaviour on a single day, for de Sade was certainly exploring conscientiously all imaginable extensions of sexual pleasures, from which he was to draw his theories and illustrations at a later date; but his behaviour departs very greatly from the clinical picture of active sadism. On this occasion his behaviour was predominantly masochist; and, as in his writings, the anal theme is almost completely dominant. He clearly hoped that the aniseed would produce copious flatus.

Marguerite Coste was first treated by some unqualified practitioner; then, when the vomiting continued, the police were called in. Within a week the arrest of de Sade and Latour was ordered; but, apparently having been privately warned, the two of them had left the country, accompanied by his sister-in-law, Made-moiselle de Launay. A few weeks later de Sade was condemned to death for poisoning (which was absurd: both the invalids had completely recovered and in August had formally withdrawn their complaints) and he and Latour were condemned for sodomy, for which the death penalty was no longer exacted; the two of them were to make public penance, de Sade to be beheaded and Latour hanged, and both bodies burned. In their absence they were condemned as defaulting and contumacious and were executed in effigy; de Sade's property was seized and his wife made his children's legal guardian.

The complete disproportion between the severity of the sentence and the alleged crime (it must be remembered that we have only the accounts of hostile witnesses) is so great that further explanations are needed. A variety are forthcoming.

Firstly, by an unfortunate coincidence, the Parliament at Aix, where the judgment took place, was under the influence of the same de Maupéou who had condemned de Sade in Paris four years before. This man appears to have been a puritan, with the salacious mind and bitter cruelty that one associates with puritanism. Also, as has already been mentioned, he was a personal enemy of the Président de Montreuil, de Sade's father-in-law, and anything which would disgrace his family would be of advantage to him. This would partially account for the continuance of the case, even after the 'poisoned' girls had withdrawn their complaints. It would also account for the charge, if true, that de Sade brings against him³ of manufacturing false evidence; he makes de Maupéou say in the story already referred to: 'Well, wasn't it a scandalous affair? Didn't a thirteen-year-old valet, whom we had bribed, come and tell us ...

that that man was murdering whores in his château, didn't he tell us a story of Bluebeard which nurses today wouldn't deign to use to put their children to sleep?' In the same story he writes:⁴ 'Colic is an important illness at Marseilles and Aix, since we have seen a troop of idiots, colleagues of this judge here, decide that some prostitutes who had the colic had been poisoned'; and further⁵ 'In 1772 a young nobleman of the province wanted in playful revenge to whip a courtesan who had made him a bad present; this joke was treated as a criminal affair, as murder and poisoning, and this judge won all his colleagues over to this ridiculous opinion, destroyed the young man and had him condemned to death by contumacy, since they could not get hold of his person.' De Sade wrote this fictional account of his trial in the Bastille in 1787.

There is however another possibility, equally mentioned by de Sade, and so far ignored: this is that the actual charge was merely an excuse, the real reason for his condemnation being political writings. The passage in question occurs in *Aline et Valcour*⁶ which we have seen is partly autobiographical; it is mainly concerned with the capture of de Sade in Paris in 1777, and will be quoted subsequently. When the judge (judges were understandably among de Sade's favourite villains) boasts of the manner in which the accused was caught six years after the crime, his interlocutor says: "Sir, your story horrifies me: I suppose the man in question must have been guilty of high treason." "Not at all, writings against us magistrates . . . against kings; some other youthful adventures. . . ."; and, lest any reader should fail to recognize the subject of this passage, he adds a footnote: 'Monsters capable of this horror, you grow pale as you recognize your victim . . .'

The probability of this interpretation is somewhat encouraged by the fact that, in March 1773, when he was in prison in Chambéry, the ambassador de la Marmora wrote to the governor 'To keep the prisoner as close as possible, to prevent him flooding the public with his terrible writings and memoirs.'

A further hint in the same direction derives from a letter of Mademoiselle de Rousset, a warm partisan of the de Sades, who succeeded in 1780 after great risks in seeing the secret indictment against him. 'By this bold stroke,' she wrote, 'we have discovered that the *Présidente* is not as guilty as we had thought. He has, deservedly, even more powerful enemies. Before he can hope for anything some people must die and others forget.' This is tantalizingly vague; but there is no record of de Sade, in his debaucheries, having had to do with any well-born woman, other than his sister-in-law; they were all drawn from the lower orders. It therefore seems likely that his 'more powerful enemies' were actuated by some other motive.*

* It is only fair to state that Gilbert Lely, in his masterly and exhaustive *Vie du Marquis de Sade*, pays no attention to the suggestions that de Sade may have been interested in, or involved in, political activities, before the

For three months after his escape the Marquis de Sade, using as an incognito a secondary title of Comte de Mazan, travelled around Italy accompanied by Mademoiselle de Launay, whom he sometimes named as his wife and sometimes as his sister-in-law; they were accompanied and looked after by Latour, de Sade's companion and fellow-condemned in the Marseilles debauch, and a second manservant, Carteron, nicknamed La Jeunesse, who later served as de Sade's amanuensis; with him too de Sade was very intimate. In October the party arrived at Chambéry, then belonging to the kingdom of Sardinia, and de Sade rented a country house for six months. Shortly thereafter Mademoiselle de Launay left him, ostensibly to go to Italy, but apparently to visit her sister at La Coste. She returned again for a short time and then left him again. Her movements thereafter are obscure; she paid a short visit to La Coste in 1774 and died unmarried in 1781.

A few weeks after her departure de Sade was arrested and made a prisoner in the fortress of Miolans. This arrest was made at the personal request of Madame de Montreuil to the Sardinian ambassador at Versailles; the foreign minister and the King of Sardinia were happy to oblige so influential a French lady.

It seems fairly certain that it was the public elopement with her younger daughter (at the period regarded as incestuous) which finally transformed Madame de Montreuil from de Sade's censorious protector to his most bitter enemy. She had arranged the marriage in the first place to gratify her social ambitions, and doubtless in the hope that such a noble connection would ensure better-born spouses for her remaining children; with this public elopement the chances of Mademoiselle de Launay finding any husband, much less a high-born one, were very seriously diminished. But if de Sade were under continuous restraint, the scandal might die down and Anne-Prospère find a husband; and indeed in subsequent years negotiations were well advanced for a match with a Monsieur de Beaumont, a Flemish gentleman; but they came to nothing.

It is also possible that Madame de Montreuil thought that she was acting in the interest of her elder daughter and her grandchildren; but Madame de Sade did not share these views, sided completely with her peccant husband, and treated her mother as though she were her greatest enemy, as well as her husband's. She seems never to have hesitated in this course, even though she had been com-

outbreak of the revolution. In all other areas Monsieur Lely's accounts and documentation are definitive; but, it would seem, he has such a personal distaste for Republican ideas, that he will overlook or explain away de Sade's advocacy of them. Much of de Sade's writings, as this book documents, are concerned with political subjects, particularly the second volume of *Aline et Valcour*, the long pamphlet in *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, and much of *Juliette*; but, in the accounts he gives of these books, M. Lely barely touches on this aspect. I do not agree with his interpretation of the available material.

pletely abandoned, in favour of her younger sister, for many months; and she set out to rescue her husband with surprising courage and devotion.

De Sade was a prisoner in Miolans for five months. This is one of the most fully documented periods of his life; we can follow him almost from day to day. He seems to have been fairly comfortable, spending a good deal on his upkeep, gambling with his gaolers and fellow prisoners, getting into furious rages and apologizing, and insisting on the respect due to his rank. Not altogether without justification, he felt he was being persecuted, and threatened publication of memoirs to justify himself; but this does not seem to be all he was writing, for Madame de Montreuil, in her correspondence with the Sardinian foreign minister, was anxious to get hold of all his letters, manuscripts, and 'bad books'. She was thwarted in her attempts to control all his correspondence, for de Sade managed to have letters sent and delivered under a cover address.

In March, Madame de Sade, dressed as a man and with only one male companion named Alberet, arrived at Chambéry in the vain hope of seeing him and helping him to escape; she stayed a week but could not get to him. Later in the month de Sade made a formal submission to break every link with Mademoiselle de Launay, to return all her letters and 'to keep a hundred leagues away from Paris as long as is required, to stop writing any memoirs, prayers or other insults which might harm or impede a proposed marriage which it is feared I might do and which I wish for even more than they do'. Shortly after making this submission, he staged an (apparently faked) suicide attempt with a knife, giving himself very minor cuts, and started acting as a model prisoner. He made his Easter communion, kept his temper, and was shortly given greater privileges; among these was the permission to change his dining room.

The new dining room had a lavatory with an unbarred window; and on May 1st he, accompanied by Latour and a fellow-prisoner, escaped through this with the aid of knotted sheets, and perhaps a ladder supplied by a young man, Joseph Violon, who had been the go-between in the clandestine correspondence with Madame de Sade. The details of the escape - lights left burning in the cell, ironic notes of apology to the governor of the prison - are in the best tradition of the adventure novel. The governor, the warder and, eventually Joseph Violon, were all severely punished for not having prevented, or having assisted, his evasion.

The events of the next few months are obscure. It is unlikely that de Sade returned immediately to La Coste; but by December he and his wife were there, and also, perhaps, Mademoiselle de Launay. Madame de Montreuil was more eager than ever to get hold of his letters and manuscripts; and in January of the following year an Inspector of Police, with an armed escort, broke into the house to search for de Sade, and when they failed to find him, broke open and destroyed much of his furniture and seized or burned all the papers

they could find. The Inspector was under the direct orders of Madame de Montreuil, to whom he paid no less than ten visits and who bore all the expenses of this expedition. It is possible that de Sade escaped apprehension by hiding in a little secret room in the roof, as he did with a second attempt three years later.

After this near-escape, de Sade seems to have spent some six months travelling round France under an assumed name, visiting friends and constantly changing residence; he may have spent some time in Grenoble. In June he returned to La Coste.

Although the de Sades were very short of money, the year 1774 seemed hopeful to them. Louis XV had died and the *lettre de cachet* under his name automatically lost its validity; moreover, de Maupéou was finally disgraced. Madame de Sade prepared a formal complaint against her mother for persecution, and went to Paris to start the lawsuit and interview the people who might get her husband's sentence quashed. She received a good deal of encouragement but nothing concrete; in the autumn her funds were completely exhausted, and she had to return; with her back turned, her mother was able to undo all that her daughter had accomplished, and the lawsuit against her seems to have petered out. Madame de Sade met de Sade at Lyons; and there they engaged five young girls as servants and a youth as secretary before returning to La Coste for the winter.

Of the many enigmas which make the interpretation of de Sade's life so difficult, none is more obscure than the character of Madame de Sade. She has been called 'a saint of married life,' a convenient but misleading label. She not only submitted to her husband, she actively aided and abetted him; indeed some of her actions suggest that she acted knowingly as a procuress. One of the young girls engaged at Lyons, who was later reclaimed by her parents, gave the most lurid accounts of the way de Sade had treated her; of his wife she had only praise, adding that she was usually the first victim of a rage which was near madness. There is no certainty that the girl's story is true; de Sade's reputation at this time was so bad that anything could be believed against him, and the story was dragged out by his enemies. But he did undoubtedly make one of the chambermaids pregnant; to stop this girl telling undesirable stories, Madame de Sade had her arrested (under a *lettre de cachet* which she received as a present from her mother) and kept in a convent under a completely false charge of theft. She seems to have abandoned her children to their grandmother without a murmur; she fought for her husband against his family (the Abbé de Sade now sided with Madame de Montreuil) and hers; she humiliated herself out of all measure; and yet she seems to have maintained to the end an almost unmitigated innocence.

She cannot possibly be considered simple-minded; she was not particularly religious; and passionate love is not altogether an adequate explanation, for love demands some return, and de Sade can

hardly, with his years of neglect and his expressed passion for her younger sister, have let her think he had a deep and exclusive love for her. But she must have found him fascinating; as their later correspondence shows, he played the whole emotional gamut with her, from the most furious rages to tender and licentious teasing and deep emotional trust. Life with him may have been melodramatic and agonizing; but what did life without him offer to Madame de Sade? She seems to have had very few personal attractions; she was apparently tall, gawky, ungraceful, and extremely shabby in her dress; de Sade must have made her life *interesting* as no one else could have done. It cannot be argued that she was constrained by fear, or in any other way; on the contrary every sort of device and bribe were offered to separate her from her husband; in 1778 threats were used to prevent her rejoining him; her mother, who was working for what she considered to be her daughter's interests, became for fifteen years her daughter's greatest enemy.

Madame de Montreuil is easier to understand. She was a very rich and very clever woman with too little to do, so that all her energies went into intrigue. After de Sade's elopement with her favourite daughter her one aim was de Sade's destruction. He must be imprisoned for life. At the same time the sentence against him must be quashed and all scandal concerning him hushed up; for otherwise her daughter and grandchildren would be dishonoured, and Anne-Prospère would lose all chance of marrying well. With this double aim in view she employed her very considerable influence with the judges and the Court to get the sentence revised; at the same time she used all means to insure that, once formally acquitted, de Sade would stand no chance of freedom. More or less openly, she bribed de Sade's servants and relations; she even bought over his lawyer, so that de Sade could make no move of which she was not immediately informed. During his enforced absences, de Sade left his keys with this lawyer-steward, Gaufridy; Madame de Montreuil got him to break into his desk and steal some papers from his pocketbook which could be used against him.* Although de Sade seems to have suspected this double-dealing on the part of his lawyer, he was never quite convinced of it; moreover this man Gaufridy was on the spot and could collect money and deal with the estate during his many absences; despite his suspicions he never broke with him.

The Marquis and Marquise with the five young maidservants and the young secretary made their way to La Coste, and the château was shut down for the winter. They seem practically to have lived in a state of siege, with the drawbridge down a few hours only in the middle of the day; they received no visits.

* According to de Sade these papers consisted of (1) the receipt for a benign abortifacient; (2) a note on the poisons used by the ancient Romans on their weapons; (3) the psycho-sexual autobiography of a man he met in Rome, which he had copied out in his own handwriting.

Whether there were any orgies at the château this winter, and if so of what nature, and who took part in them, can only be guessed at. Besides the young girls, there were three other women at the château, two of them apparently in the kitchen, and the third, a dancer named du Plan, who was engaged as 'housekeeper.' According to de Sade, this woman brought with her from Lyons some human bones:

As a joke – a good or a bad one as you prefer – these were used to decorate a small room; they were authentically used for this purpose and then buried in the garden when the joke, or rather the stupidity, was over. You can count the bones and compare them with the receipt I have from du Plan of the number and sorts she brought from Marseilles; you will see that there's not one more.

In January, 1776, the parents of three of the young girls arrived at La Coste to demand the return of their children. Madame de Montreuil was so intimately concerned with the whole affair (Madame de Sade asked her for advice) that it is difficult to tell whether she was really trying to cover up scandals, as she claimed, or to manufacture fresh evidence against her son-in-law. Considering what we know of de Sade, it seems likely that the complaints were not unfounded; in which case his wife's role becomes even more complex. She imagined that she was again pregnant this spring, but inaccurately; it was her chambermaid who was in this interesting condition.

Later in the year a second search was made for de Sade by the military, but he again hid successfully; he seems to have decided that La Coste was too dangerous and left for a year's travel in Italy, accompanied by La Jeunesse. He visited Florence, Rome and Naples under the title of Comte de Mazan, and made some firm friends with whom he subsequently corresponded; he had an audience with the Pope and, after some difficulty, was presented at Court in Naples. It is not known whether he travelled with any feminine company; in a footnote to *Juliette*⁷ he claims complete accuracy for the description of the various historical personages on the ground that he visited Italy with a very beautiful woman whom 'uniquely on the principle of sexual philosophy, I introduced to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, to the Pope, to Princess Borghese, and to the King and Queen of Naples.' This is obviously unverifiable.

It is also possible that, on this journey, or the preceding one, he visited Rousseau in Geneva. There is a curious passage in *Aline et Valcour*⁸ in which Valcour, who, as we have seen, is at least in part a self-portrait of de Sade, writes:

Rousseau was then living and I went to see him; he had known my family and received me with great kindness; he praised and encouraged the project that he saw that I had formed to renounce

everything to give myself over entirely to the study of literature and philosophy; he gave me good advice and taught me to separate true virtue from the detestable systems under which it is smothered. . . .

'My friend,' he said to me one day, 'as soon as the rays of virtue shone on men, they, too dazzled by their radiance, put in the way of these waves of light the prejudices of superstition, and the only sanctuary that remained for virtue was the bottom of the heart of honest men. Detest vice, be just, love your neighbours, enlighten them; then you will feel virtue resting sweetly in your soul and you will have daily consolation for the pride of the rich and the stupidity of the despot.'

If this passage is not autobiographical it is difficult to understand its existence, for there is no other example in the whole book of a famous person being mentioned by name; in the novel *Valcour* is not a writer but exclusively an unhappy lover. Moreover, by this time de Sade was serious in his intention to become a writer; he wrote, with a view to publication, long descriptions of Rome and Florence,* and he had also written two other volumes which Madame de Montreuil had had abstracted from his desk, to his great distress; he was still trying to recover these early manuscripts thirteen years later. It is pleasant to think that these two great revolutionaries, the one romantic, the other realist, should have met and conversed; but it is distressing that the influence of the romantic should have dominated so completely both his own century and the following one.

In July 1776, de Sade was back in Grenoble, where he engaged another young secretary; and in October he was at Montpellier, where he engaged a second housemaid, on the recommendation of one of the girls who had left with such *éclat* two years earlier, and a cook named Catherine Trillet, called Justine at La Coste. The Marquis and Marquise were at La Coste for the winter, so short of money that they had barely enough to eat, no wood for fire, and no money to repair the windows in Madame de Sade's bedroom, with the result that she fell ill. Madame de Montreuil sent enough to cover immediate expenses.

Another attempt was made to arrest Sade in December; but again he was warned and was able to hide. In the first days of 1777, Catherine Trillet's father came to demand his daughter back, fired a pistol at de Sade but missed him. He returned to the charge twice, unsuccessfully, and then started legal proceedings. It seems as if the man was unbalanced; although Madame de Sade paid off Justine (according to de Sade she was a very plain girl), she preferred to stay with the Marquise and accompanied her to Paris, when she set

* These were intended to form part of his lost miscellany, *Le Portefeuille d'un Homme de Lettres*; they remain in manuscript, so far unpublished.

off by one route, and de Sade, accompanied by La Jeunesse, by another.

The reason for de Sade's making this rash journey was that his mother was dying. In fact, she was dead, before he set out; but it seems possible that Madame de Montreuil purposely gave the false information that he could still see her, as a trap. In the story already quoted, de Sade writes:

A gentleman who had a case against him at the Parliament of Aix . . . and which the Parliament . . . was only willing to compose with his wife's family on the condition of a long detention, this gentleman, I say, who had been in hiding for several years, carried away by the imbecile delicacy of wanting to care for his dying mother, came to Paris in spite of the dangers. Hardly was he in the dead woman's room when his wife's family had him arrested. He complained of this procedure. . . . they laughed in his face and threw him into a dungeon at the Bastille, where amusingly enough he could weep at the same time for the loss of his liberty, the death of his mother and the barbarous stupidity of his relations.

This is the passage to which de Sade draws attention by identifying himself in a footnote.⁹

The arrest wasn't quite as dramatic as he depicts. Sade was staying with his old tutor d'Amblet, under his false name; his wife told Madame de Montreuil where he was; and three days later he was once more arrested by Inspector Marais and taken to the old prison of Vincennes.

He was kept in Vincennes for fifteen months, in solitary confinement, seeing nobody except the man who brought him his food once a day, and allowed practically no exercise. In the first sixty-five days he had five hours in a courtyard forty feet square. His health deteriorated very badly: he suffered from headaches, hemorrhoids, insomnia. But worse than these physical sufferings was his mental distress; he feared at one moment he was going mad, for, as he wrote to Madame de Montreuil: 'Neither my temperament nor my character can stand close restraint'; and he asked her to allow him to go into exile. But this did not fit into her plans: it was necessary to have the judgment of Aix annulled for the honour of the family; and it was necessary to keep de Sade permanently shut up so that there should be no impediment to the projected marriage of Mademoiselle de Launay. To achieve these aims she tried to have de Sade declared legally insane; but he refused to cooperate in this.

She then decided to make use of her oldest daughter for these ends, and they worked together to have the judgment annulled. Madame de Montreuil's treatment of the Marquise during this period appears quite monstrous. She would deceive her whenever she could - she did not inform her when and where de Sade was imprisoned, and equally kept her in the dark when he was trans-

ferred to Aix, letting her think him gravely ill when his letters ceased; but when her daughter could be useful to her designs, either directly as in the application for the rehearing of the Aix judgment, or indirectly, by lulling de Sade into false security, she would again act the kind and forgiving mother, and poor Renée was deceived every time. Madame de Montreuil was splendidly unscrupulous, except that she was apparently not sensual, a true model of one of de Sade's heroines, letting no consideration of pity or love stand in the way of the gratification of her lust for power. The Marquise was never a match for her, could never believe that her signs of affection were meaningless. As de Sade became more helpless, her letters to him become ever more touching and affectionate, almost heart-broken during the long silence when he was away at Aix; at this time she does not seem to have resented in any way his outbursts of temper.

In June, 1778, de Sade was conducted to Aix by Inspector Marais, assisted by his brother and two other police officers; he gave himself up to the Court at Aix to purge his contumacy, and spent three weeks in prison. A pretence was made of re-examining the evidence and confronting the witnesses with the accused. Since the two 'poisoned' women were alive and well, the accusation of poisoning was immediately dropped. The lawyer Gaufridy, supplied with endless funds by Madame de Montreuil, got them to withdraw the charge of sodomy (in which there probably was substance); the previous conviction was quashed as 'erroné et vicieux de forme' and the charge altered to 'debauchery and excessive licentiousness'. As a punishment for this, de Sade was admonished from the bench, fined fifty livres for charity, and ordered to keep away from Marseilles for three years. From this date to the end of his life (with the exception of a few months in 1793) no legal charge was ever brought against him, yet he spent all but ten of the thirty-seven years which remained to him in close confinement.

The means by which he was kept in prison till the outbreak of the revolution was the *lettre de cachet* granted to Madame de Montreuil in February 1777. This monstrous piece of tyranny, by which a person is kept in preventive imprisonment, was a well-known feature of the *ancien régime*. It was made doubly intolerable by being granted to private persons of influence for reasons of family interest or personal revenge. Nowadays, of course, it is only used by states.

It is possible that de Sade was tricked into acquiescing to the *lettre de cachet* as an allegedly necessary formality to his legal acquittal. In the story about de Maupéou already referred to he writes:¹⁰

The idea of a *lettre de cachet* revolts you, but wasn't it by barbarously advising it that you finished the destruction of that gentleman? Did you not dare by a prevarication as dangerous as it is punishable to place this unfortunate soldier between the choice of prison and infamy, and only suspended your powers on condition that he should be crushed by those of the King?

Certainly de Sade was horrified when he realized that his legal acquittal was not to be followed by personal freedom. Marais, with his brother and the two other police officers, started to lead him back to Paris in a berline; but on the second night at Valence he made a successful dash for freedom under cover of night, and within two days succeeded in reaching La Coste.

La Coste seems to have been nearly uninhabited. The only servant was the Swiss woman Gothon, the mistress of de Sade's devoted manservant La Jeunesse, and herself equally devoted to her master; and as housekeeper there was Mademoiselle de Rousset, a woman four years younger than him, who was a childhood friend and a very distant relation. Mademoiselle de Rousset was an indefatigable, sprightly, provincial bluestocking, well-meaning, muddle-headed and consumptive, incurably arch and daring in her conversation and letters. She espoused the cause of the de Sades wholeheartedly; she subsequently lived in Paris for some years with Madame de Sade and tried to help her in her efforts to regain her husband's freedom. She and the prisoner carried on a flirtatious correspondence for some time, in which they occasionally exchanged amatory verses in Provençal, somewhat to Madame de Sade's ungrounded jealousy. Eventually, when there was no hope of de Sade's release, she returned to La Coste in 1784 with the intention of putting things in order, made a fantastic muddle of everything, and died there.

On the present occasion, it would have been well if de Sade had paid more attention to her; for she tried to put him on guard against the treachery of the lawyer Gaufridy; but de Sade would not listen to her. He wrote to him within three days of his arrival at La Coste. De Sade seems to have cherished the illusion that he was now to be left in freedom, that the anger of his mother-in-law was mollified; he wrote unctuous letters to Gaufridy and others which could be publicly shown around to express his gratitude and affection for Madame de Montreuil.

Madame de Montreuil of course was furious. She had Renée informed of her husband's escape, and threatened her with imprisonment too if she tried to rejoin him at La Coste. For a time she returned her daughter's letters unopened. Then she feigned to relent, so that the Marquise could send de Sade reassuring letters; on the strength of these he abandoned the hiding places which he had first sought when he was informed that suspicious characters were lurking round the neighbourhood; and on August 26th in the early morning the Inspector Marais, accompanied by ten armed men, was able to recapture his prisoner without difficulty at La Coste. De Sade had been free for thirty-nine days.

The Inspector however over-reached himself. When he arrested de Sade, he said, 'Now then, little man, speak up, speak up. You're going to be shut up for the rest of your life for having done this and that in a back room upstairs where there are dead bodies!' This complete realization of the bluebeard legend in all its details seems

almost comic; but police-inspectors must learn that, even if they are sent by a lady to arrest her son-in-law, they must treat their prisoner with the respect due to one of her relations! Inspector Marais was dismissed and ruined.

De Sade was bound in bonds, and no attempt was made to hide the transportation of the noble prisoner. At Avignon, which was full of Sade connections, more than three hundred people saw the cortège go by. On September 7th he was safely delivered back to Vincennes.

Thanks to the letters and manuscripts preserved in de Sade's family which the present Marquis made available to Monsieur Lely, this period of de Sade's life – the first seven years of his imprisonment under the monarchy – has changed from being the most obscure to almost the best documented; we can follow de Sade, if not from day to day, at least from month to month in his prison treatment, in the vicissitudes of his deteriorating physical health, and his nearly insane delusions, his frequent and violent quarrels with his gaolers, his most complex relations with his wife and with other correspondents. De Sade's intimate letters are extraordinarily revealing, with a vivacity and variety of style and mood which are, as far as my knowledge goes, unequalled in the published correspondence of any other eighteenth-century writer.

His physical treatment was appalling. His room in the old fortress of Vincennes was very dark, very high, very cold, damp, swarming with rats and mice; when the governor, the corrupt Monsieur de Rougemont, was angry with him, he was fed through a grill in the door, like a wild animal in a ménagerie. Except when his food was brought he saw no human being. For the first three months he had no exercise at all; then he was allowed two hours exercise a week in an enclosed courtyard. His desire for exercise is one of the most constant themes in his letters and formal applications. At times he achieved five hours a week; but the constant punishment for indiscipline was the withdrawal of the privilege of exercise; after he had exchanged insults with Mirabeau (a fellow prisoner and a distant cousin) he was deprived of all exercise for 36 weeks.

A régime of this sort would be murderous for any man; for a person like de Sade who prized liberty above all things, and who was removed from the greatest sexual licence to complete abstinence at the age of thirty-seven, the physical and mental torture must have been overwhelming. In an appeal addressed to Monsieur Le Noir, the police lieutenant-general, he begs 'Give me back my freedom, for its loss is the greatest torture possible for a man with the sort of physique that I have received from nature.' De Sade was without self-delusions concerning his own character; in 1783 he wrote to his wife that he was 'imperious, quick-tempered, uncontrolled, extreme in everything, with an unbridled imagination as far as morals are concerned which has never been paralleled. In two words, that is me; and, once more, either kill me or take me as I am, for I shall

not change.' His boast was justified; though they did nearly kill him, and nearly drove him mad, he did not change.

At various times in his imprisonment de Sade suffered from bronchial troubles, so that he could not breathe and had nose-bleeds when he lay flat; he grew enormously fat through the rich diet (especially after he was transferred to the Bastille, where he could order any food he wished) and the absence of exercise; but his most grievous sufferings were caused by an affection of one eye, which wracked him with pain and, even after he was allowed visits from ophthalmists, left him permanently blind in that eye.

He thought that his eye trouble was caused by the barber who came to shave him putting poison in his eye on the order of Madame de Montreuil; he had severe delusions of persecution (he was, of course, being persecuted) and, at another period, thought his food was being poisoned, again at the instance of his mother-in-law; he had violent quarrels with his wife and all his friends (with the significant exception of his valet La Jeunesse), whom he accused of taking part in the plots against him.

Further, particularly in the first years of imprisonment, he had very elaborate delusions of reference. As he wrote: 'a prisoner always takes everything to refer to himself and always imagines that everything that's done concerns him, that everything that is said is said with a purpose'; and, after the first few months of his permanent imprisonment, he was engaged in a crazy decoding of hidden messages in letters or in anything else that he received or that was done to him. He had no idea at all of what his future was to be or when Madame de Montreuil's anger would be satiated; but he imagined that other people, particularly his wife, Mademoiselle de Rousset, and the prison governor *did* know the date of his release and were communicating the news to him by 'signals', by numbers hidden in the words of letters, or the date, or the number of syllables, or the number of candles borrowed and returned, or almost any other combination from which numbers could be extracted. Thus when his little daughter Laure, whom he had never seen, added a note at the end of one of her mother's letters, de Sade interpreted: 'This letter has 72 syllables corresponding with the 72 weeks of my imprisonment; it has 7 lines and 7 syllables which are exactly the 7 months and 7 days from April 17th to January 22nd 1780.'

It would seem that numbers always had a fascination for de Sade, a trait not incongruent with his strongly anal character. During the Marseilles orgy, it will be remembered, he kept a tally of the strokes given and received, and told the last of the girls he still had 25 strokes to make. In his fictions numbers play a great part in the description of his various characters' excesses; in *Fuliette* he is continually working out the exact state of his heroine's finances, and deducing her income from her current capital; the framework of *Les 120 Journées* is numerical symmetry. His business letters are full of the most intricate and detailed financial calculations.

During the worst period of his delusions of reference, in the first years of imprisonment, he was extracting messages from the 'signals' on a wide variety of subjects; not only the date of his release, or the restitution of his exercise periods, but plans to exile him to the Islands, or to have him made an ambassador. When his deductions were proved false, he did not conclude that his system was wrong, but that the messages were intentionally inaccurate in order to torment him by raising false hopes. He quarrelled with Mademoiselle de Rousset on account of the 'signals' he had discovered in her letters; and from his wife's letters he discovered through 'signals' that she was being physically unfaithful to him with a man called Lefèvre, a man who had been his secretary ten years earlier, and whom the Marquise had employed to do some commissions for him. His jealousy was manifested by the most violent rage; the governor had to stop her visits to the prisoner (they had only just been allowed) and hold back his letters. This crisis of unjustified jealousy lasted five months in 1781; the Marquise manifested no resentment.

There are relatively few letters in these early years of imprisonment which do not contain some reference to 'signals' – some of them deal with little else, and the tone is usually one of weary anger, complaints of the tediousness of the false information invented to bring in the 'signals' naturally; but in a New Year's letter to La Jeunesse in 1780 he turns even the 'signals' into farce to make his correspondent laugh; La Jeunesse writes respectfully teasing letters to his master, complaining that his handwriting was like a swarm of bees (La Jeunesse acted as his amanuensis, making fair copies of his works when he started to write for publication). Le Jeunesse was nominally in attendance on Madame de Sade at her convent, but would frequently disappear on debauches lasting several days; he was so devoted, however, that she kept him on until his death in 1785.

In the first months of his imprisonment de Sade seems to have had hopes of a fairly early release. It is possible that Madame de Montreuil purposely deceived Mademoiselle de Rousset into believing that de Sade would be released in the spring of 1780 (news which she of course communicated to the prisoner); a petition was got up among the inhabitants of La Coste requesting the return of their Seigneur; Madame de Sade and Mademoiselle de Rousset were busy with interviews and bribes. But Madame de Montreuil was able to counter all these moves. Besides her lust for power she had at least two other motives. There were her children to get married and established; Mademoiselle de Launay died unmarried in 1781, but in 1783 the youngest daughter married the Marquis de Wavrin, and there was also a son with a career to forward; and also she wanted to get control of her daughter's dowry. De Sade resolutely refused to sign away any legal rights while he was held in prison; but after he had been 'absent' for ten years Madame de

Montreuil got a legal decree passed, without de Sade's consent, for the administration of his property, under the trusteeship of her husband and the acting head of the house of Sade. The Marquise was to receive the income; but the control of the capital would be effectively in Madame de Montreuil's hands.

By the end of 1780, de Sade seems to have given up all realistic hopes of release and to have turned his back on the world. He refers to this period of his life as his 'pressurage', taking metaphor from the wine-press. Gaolers and doctors apart, his only contact with the outside world was through correspondence (and his favourite correspondents died - Mademoiselle de Rousset in 1784, La Jeunesse a year later; he seems to have had veridic dreams foretelling the deaths of friends and relations) and the intermittent visits of his wife; these latter were frequently interrupted when he flew into rages because of his groundless suspicions of infidelity, or because she arrived dressed in white 'like a tart', or on foot instead of in a carriage, as a lady should. Apart from the lack of freedom, and insufficient or forbidden exercise, the rigours of his situation were lessened. He could receive books and newspapers, had ample supplies of pens, ink and paper - all that was necessary for an author; and he started to take his vocation as a writer with the greatest seriousness.

He read omnivorously; there are very few authors who were available in French to whom he does not refer either directly or by implication; he seems to have possessed some conversational German and Italian but there is nothing to show that he was able to read in those languages. He filled notebooks with excerpts of what he had read. He also seems to have worked out the technique of writing to which he subsequently adhered.

It was his custom first of all to make a rough plan of the work in project - just a few pages - noting the salient traits of his characters and working out the time schedule and similar structural details. When the main outlines of the work were clear in his mind he would write a first draft extremely quickly, abbreviating and not revising, writing on the average about 4,000 words a day. His handwriting was neat and even and very close. He left wide margins in which, at the first revision, he would insert additions and corrections, writing messages to himself (in the second person plural) when there were possible repetitions or inconsistencies to check up. Longer additions would be written in a separate notebook. When the original draft had been reshaped and improved to his satisfaction he would make a fair copy of the whole (and, in most cases, send out the work to have further copies made by an amanuensis). The only exception to this practice which we know of is the manuscript of *Les 120 Journées*; this is a first draft (all that survives) written in almost microscopical handwriting and covering both sides of a roll of paper five inches wide and thirteen yards long. This device was probably adopted to make the hiding of the work easier against searches.

In Vincennes, in the first years of his serious writing, he seems to have concentrated almost entirely upon plays. Quite a number of these early plays have survived in manuscript in the possession of his descendants; excerpts have been published, but they show so few qualities other than industry that it is unlikely that they will ever see the light of day.

Of de Sade's writings in Vincennes all that has been published is the plan for a play, and a short elegant dialogue on atheism - *Dialogue entre un Prêtre et un Moribond* - and this still keeps to the theatrical form. Because of its atheism (presumably) it does not figure in the catalogue of his works which he drew up in October 1788. We cannot tell if there were other clandestine writings. He also kept a diary, partly in cypher, writing one volume a year which was in the possession of his descendants (save for two volumes) until the sack of the château in 1941. It has now disappeared and, as far as is known, has never been examined.

In February 1784 Vincennes was closed down as a prison; and de Sade was transferred, to his indignation, to the Bastille. Life seems to have been somewhat less disagreeable there, apart from his ill-health, and the Governor less oppressive; but we have far less information about the later years of his imprisonment because the visits from his wife were far more frequent, and so his letters to her far fewer. He was lodged in the ironically named Tour de la Liberté, first on the second and later on the sixth floor. Though physical freedom was completely denied him, he attained with his pen such mental freedom as few have known either before or since his time. Nearly every aspect of human behaviour was scrutinized and criticized by him with originality and independent analysis. In his isolation he developed and made coherent his philosophy and psychology. For nine years he read and wrote almost continuously; and his output was correspondingly large.

The *catalogue raisonné* which he drew up of his writings in October 1788 lists the material for fifteen volumes, and this excludes his clandestine work. There were two volumes of plays - 15 separate works in 35 acts; 4 volumes of long short stories, later intended to be regrouped into *Les Contes et Fabliaux d'un Troubadour Provençal*; a 4-volume miscellany *La porte-feuille d'un homme de lettres*, of which only fragments survive; the 4-volume novel *Aline et Valcour*; and the first finished one-volume version of *Les Malheurs de la Vertu*, subsequently entitled *Justine*. An earlier draft of this work, *Les Infortunes de la Vertu*, written in 1787, was not included in his catalogue, but was subsequently published. Of his clandestine work, only *Les 120 Journées* can be dated with certainty; but internal evidence suggests that much of the first half of *Juliette* dates from before 1790.

De Sade clearly foresaw the Revolution which was approaching, foretelling it in some of his writings, particularly *Aline et Valcour*, the most overtly political of the works he wrote in prison; it is even

tempting to say that he precipitated it. In July 1789 there were only 7 prisoners left in the Bastille (there were 27 a year earlier); the old fortress was nearly empty, and at the end of June the authorities started reconverting it to its old use, putting the guns on the towers into readiness against the unruly citizens of Paris. On July 2nd de Sade was consequently refused permission to take his customary exercise on the top of the tower where the guns were being readied. Furious, he improvised a loud-speaker out of a metal tube and funnel which were used for emptying slops, and called out of the window to the populace to rescue the prisoners whose throats were being cut. A crowd was gathered by this device; the governor of the prison felt the danger sufficiently seriously to request the removal of 'this person whom nobody can subdue'. 'If Monsieur de Sade' he wrote urgently 'is not removed from the Bastille to-night, I cannot be answerable to the King for the safety of the building.' On July 3rd de Sade was duly transferred to the asylum of Charenton, a hospital for madmen and epileptics. Eleven days later the ancient and nearly empty fortress of the Bastille was stormed by the mob, whose anger against it has never appeared to have adequate grounds. Three-quarters of de Sade's manuscripts (including the draft of *Les 120 Journées*) 'whose loss he wept for in tears of blood' were lost on that occasion, according to him due to the dilatoriness of his wife, who put off fetching them from day to day. She also destroyed some of the manuscripts he had confided to her, on the ground that they were dangerous.

While he was in Charenton de Sade's two sons came to visit him; and they stayed on quite good terms until the sons emigrated – the elder in September 1791, the younger (who deserted from the army) in May 1792; by so doing they put de Sade into considerable danger, as the father of émigrés, and he was forced to write formal letters denouncing them. He found his sons honest and well-bred, but cold and uncharitable: the Montreuil blood had subdued the warmth of the Provençal de Sades. He also somewhat later met his daughter, whom he considered frankly ugly and stupid: but she stayed with her mother in one convent or another (they emigrated later, during the Terror, and then returned to live with Madame de Montreuil), and Madame de Sade refused to see her husband again; as soon as de Sade was released she demanded a legal separation, and the restitution of her dowry; to back up this demand she raked up all the old lawsuits of the beginning of her married life.

The reasons for this untypical behaviour, so contrary to her devotion of the previous twenty years, are quite obscure; it may have been due to the financial prudence of the Montreuils; or, as de Sade suspected, the convent confessors may have worked on her latent religious scruples. In any case, after de Sade was released, they only met once, in the presence of the lawyer Reinaud, to sort out their financial disputes. She agreed to leave the unrealizable capital of her dowry in Sade's hands, in return for a substantial annual

income as alimony; de Sade agreed but, as far as the records show, never paid her a penny.

In March 1790, the Constituent Assembly released all prisoners held by *lettre de cachet*; and on April 2nd, 1790, which was Good Friday, de Sade re-entered the world, a free man at the age of fifty, after thirteen years of almost continuous imprisonment, mostly in virtual solitary confinement. He was homeless and penniless, and found the first re-entry into the world very difficult. In a letter to the lawyer Gaufridy in May he writes of himself: 'In prison my sight and my lungs have been ruined; being deprived of all exercise I have become so enormously fat that I can hardly move; all my feelings are extinguished; I have no longer any taste for anything. I enjoy nothing any more; the world which foolishly enough I so wildly regretted seems to me so boring. . . . and so dull. . . . I have never been more misanthropic than I am now that I have returned among men, and, if I seem peculiar to others, they can rest assured that they produce the same effect on me. I had been very busy during my imprisonment, and had fifteen volumes ready for the press; on my release I have only about a quarter left, thanks to the criminal carelessness of Madame de Sade. . . .'

Almost as soon as he was released, de Sade regained the administration of his estate; and for the next ten years he is in continuous communication with his lawyer, always demanding money, money, money. He never had enough, for the value of money was constantly falling with the inflation; and on occasion he had difficulties in collection, as being the father of *émigrés*, and for a time being inaccurately inscribed in a list of *émigrés* himself. These letters show the worst side of de Sade's characters, testy and sycophantic in turn, disingenuous to the point of dishonesty, disproportionately avaricious. Where money and property are concerned, de Sade showed all the graspingness of his relations and in-laws. There are few people who would appear to advantage in their dealings with their lawyer and steward; de Sade certainly does not.

Gaufridy himself was a very devious character. As has been said, he consistently betrayed de Sade to Madame de Montreuil; and during the Revolution he and his son seem to have been involved in one of the royalist conspiracies. We can, however, be grateful for his careful preservation of all letters; most of our knowledge of de Sade's activities during the revolutionary decade come from this correspondence.

De Sade's first thoughts after his release was to establish himself as a playwright. His earliest visits were to his acquaintances, the actors Molé and Boutet de Monville, who seem to have become personal friends; one play was accepted by the Italian Comedy, but never acted, a second which he read to the Comédie Française was sent back for revision. A third play was unanimously accepted by the Comédie Française in September, but never acted. In all five of his plays were accepted in the next two years; but only one was

acted, *Le Comte Oxtiern*, with indifferent success; a one-act piece was hissed off the stage by professional republicans wearing their red bonnets because it was written by a ci-devant. But de Sade had sufficient encouragement to consider himself a professional playwright; as such, he was willing to write and correct as required. This admission, in a letter to his lawyer, has been taken to imply that his pen was always venal; the consistency of his published work is a sufficient refutation of this charge.

His novel, *Justine*, was published in 1791 and met with considerable success, running through five editions in the next five years; *Aline et Valcour* was also accepted, but difficulties with the publisher, in which de Sade was in no way involved, postponed its publication until 1795.

Immediately after his release de Sade spent a few weeks in a hotel, and then rented an apartment from the 40-year-old Présidente de Fleurieu, at whose house he enjoyed quite a lot of social life. In August 1790 he first met Marie Constance Veinelle, the separated wife of a Balthasar Quesnet, a commercial traveller in the United States; she was an actress, under thirty, with a young son. The pair seem to have fallen in love almost immediately, and in November they set up house together; de Sade had a quarrel with the Présidente de Fleurieu on his leaving her and breaking the lease.

De Sade and Madame Quesnet appear to have been deeply devoted to one another; in the twenty-four years of life which remained to him they were never voluntarily separated; they each worked for the other when either was in difficulty; though much less tumultuous than his earlier passions, this love seems to have been equally deep and much more enduring. He called her 'Sensible' and she nicknamed him 'Moïse'; he trusted her immediate reactions to his writings more than those of any critic. He dedicated *Justine* to her: *A ma bonne amie*. In 1793 he stated that she was his 'natural and adopted daughter', but this seems to have been done to legitimize a pension which he wished to settle on her out of his sequestered income and to cheat the income-tax authorities. There is no reason to suppose that there is any factual ground behind this statement.

Four months after he was released de Sade joined the Section Vendôme, subsequently the Section des Piques, and was assiduous in his duties as a member of this republican and revolutionary group. As their secretary, he wrote a number of petitions in their name, some of which had considerable circulation; he was employed by them in the inspection of hospitals, and the recommendations he made resulted, it is claimed, in patients in the Paris hospitals having a bed to each sufferer for the first time on record. He was one of the judges in the case of the forged banknotes ('Imagine me a judge!' he wrote incredulously to Gaufridy); and on occasion, as will be seen, acted as president of his section.

One of the most vexing questions in the life of de Sade is the

extent of his sincerity in his revolutionary activities. Monsieur Lely believes that it was all hypocritical, in great part, it would appear, because he himself finds such political ideas repulsive. But this seems to me too simple a view. De Sade seems never to have contemplated the possibility of emigration, for which so many of his peers and his own family opted, much less joining in any of the royalist conspiracies in which his lawyer Gaufridy, or his friend and relative, the duc de Clermont-Tonnerre, were implicated. He never seems to have considered withdrawing into Provence, or even leading a quiet private life in Paris. His activities were voluntary, not merely prudential.

Freedom was de Sade's abiding passion, freedom from oppression from whatever source it might arise. As he declaimed in his *Idée sur la Mode de la sanction des loix* 'I suspect and mistrust nobody; no one in the world, it may be, has more confidence than I in the Representatives, but I know how the abuse of power develops; I can uncover all the schemes of despotism, I have studied men and I know them; I know the difficulties that they make in giving up any power that is granted to them, and that nothing is more difficult than to establish limits to delegate power.' This pamphlet, of the autumn of 1792, proposed that all laws brought forward by the representatives should be directly voted on by the populace at large, because 'one should admit to the sanctioning of laws that part of the people who are most unfortunate, and, since it is them that the law strikes most frequently, they should be allowed to choose the law by which they consent to be stricken'.

De Sade seems to have modified his views about the monarchy over the years. In 1791 he wrote in a letter to Gaufridy that he desired a constitutional monarchy after the English fashion; but in the same year he wrote and published an *Address of a Citizen of Paris to the King of the French* (he claimed that he threw a copy of it into Louis XVI's carriage on the occasion of his flight) in which he reproached the king for having broken his word, and calling on him and his successors to respect the powers entrusted to them by men who are 'free and equal according to the laws of Nature'. His republican fervour seems to have been strong, his anti-royalism at best tepid. But there is little need to see irony in his protestation of 1792 that he was for the Revolution 'up to his neck'.

Among his other pamphlets for the Section des Piques was one which must have pleased him particularly: a plea to replace Catholic ceremonies by high-minded pagan rites. He later claimed, with pride, that this was the starting point of the whole anti-religious movement. Other pamphlets deal with plans for the fête to celebrate the New Constitution; the proposal to rename streets for civic virtues instead of saints, churches, and nobles; and a funeral oration to the spirits of Marat and Le Pelletier.

I do not know whether it is pure chance that thus joined these three names together, but it is a happy coincidence. De Sade had

much in common with both the subjects of his eulogy. Marat was a scientist before he was a revolutionary; his work on the diffraction of light, though considered incorrect nowadays, was far nearer to what is today held to be the truth than that of his contemporaries; but because of its very novelty – he had the audacity to try to criticize Newton – he was excommunicated by the learned bodies of his time. His revolutionary activity was chiefly journalistic, starting under the old régime and continuing despite persecution and illness to the day of his murder. He was continually critical; neither success nor reputation was safe from him. But his savagery must have been abhorrent to de Sade, who was consistently opposed to the death penalty. Le Pelletier was a strict egalitarian with a boundless trust in the potentialities of education for transforming society.

As the Terror augmented, de Sade's position became more difficult. By an error of Christian names he was inscribed on a list of émigrés in Provence, and had to write abject letters to the local citizens' committee to get his name removed; even so, his château at La Coste was broken into and pillaged on more than one occasion. And in Paris he was certainly opposed to the senseless butcheries of the Terror. In August 1793 he wrote to Gaufridy: 'I am broken, done in, spitting blood. I told you I was président of my section; my tenure has been so stormy that I am exhausted. Yesterday, for example, after having been forced to withdraw twice I was forced to abandon my seat to the vice-président. They wanted me to put to the vote a horrible and inhuman project. I definitely refused. Thank God, that's the end of that. . . . During my presidency I had the Montreuil put on a liste épuratoire [for pardon]. If I had said a word they were lost. I kept my peace. I have had my revenge.'

This clemency to his greatest enemies, the immediate cause of a lifetime of misery and imprisonment, is one of the most striking examples of de Sade's consistency. He was always opposed to the death penalty, to legal oppression, from whatever source it might come; he would not sully himself by using legal power for private revenge, as Madame de Montreuil had so consistently done. His magnanimity was worthy of his heroine Justine; and like Justine, he found that virtue is always unfortunate; four months later he was imprisoned for moderantism; it was found that he was suspect because in 1791 he had written a letter inquiring about service in the royal constitutional guard.

During the next ten months he passed through four different Republican prisons – six weeks in Les Madelonnettes, eight days at the Carmelites, where he had to share a room with people dying of fever, two months at Saint Lazare, and nearly six months at Picpus – in immediate danger of execution. His final prison of Picpus was the worst of all. It was outwardly agreeable, a 'sanitarium' with a large garden, and reasonably comfortable. But the guillotine was in sight of the windows; 1800 people were executed there and buried in the charming Picpus gardens. De Sade himself was con-

demned to death on July 24th, but he could not be found when he was sought on July 27th (probably because he was looked for in one of his earlier prisons); the next day the reaction of Thermidor stopped the butchery, and a month later he received a certificate from his section that he was a good citizen. It is little wonder that a year later he was still haunted by this nightmare; 'my national detention, with the guillotine under my eyes did me a hundred times more harm than all the Bastilles imaginable' he wrote to his lawyer. It is necessary to keep this appalling experience in mind when considering de Sade's writings.

He was finally released in October, thanks to the untiring efforts of Madame Quesnet, and the help of the Conventionnel Goupilleau of Vauchuse; but he was nearly penniless, and life in Paris that winter of 1794-95 was torture. It was the coldest of the century - ink froze in the bottle, wood was unobtainable, food very scarce and paper money practically valueless.

In February 1795 he wrote to a Representative Rabaut-Pommier, asking for employment in any form, as ambassador, writer, keeper of a library or museum, or any other post in which he could gain a subsistence. Despite the Representative's favour, no concrete offers were made, and in the spring he retired into the country to write. The book he wrote was almost certainly *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, which is dated 1795. This is not only much the shortest of his works, but also the most nearly pornographic; it was probably written with the direct intention of making money. A third of it however is composed of a very important political pamphlet - *Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être Républicains* - which contains the most mature surviving statement of his political views, and which will be discussed in detail later. His novel, *Aline et Valcour*, was finally published in 1795, and appears to have had some success.

Besides earning money from his writing, he also got further funds by selling off his property in Provence; in 1796 he sold his pillaged château at La Coste to the deputy Rovère, using part of the proceeds to buy two smaller properties near Chartres. This transaction involved even more than the usual amount of under-hand dealing, to circumvent the demands of Madame de Sade; she had returned from exile and was living again with her mother; Monsieur de Montreuil had died.

His elder son also returned from exile - the younger was in Malta - and saw his father. By bureaucratic mismanagement, neither of these two men, both of whom had emigrated, were ever inscribed on a list of émigrés; while their father, who had never left France, was still so inscribed, and indeed could never get his name removed; the confusion about his Christian names remained unresolved; as late as 1808 his wife and younger son were able to take advantage of this accident to invoke his 'civil death' and over-ride his wishes.

In 1797 he returned to Provence for the last time, accompanied

by Madame Quesnet and her son Charles, in an attempt to straighten out his financial affairs, and recover money which had been held back because of his name being on a list of émigrés. For some time they stayed with the Gaufridys. The journey was in every way disastrous; not only did he get no money, he became involved in an unnecessary action for slander; and by calling attention to the fact that his name was on a list of émigrés he made it far more difficult to collect any money or rents in Provence. From that date, until 1804, when his family settled an annuity on him in exchange for all his property (except a small portion he had settled on Madame Quesnet) he was in great financial difficulties.

In 1797, life in France was 'returning to normal'. There was neither anarchy nor moral freedom. The church was regaining its power, office-seekers and rogues were again in the ascendant. Babeuf's egalitarian revolt, with a programme which de Sade probably found sympathetic, was bloodily crushed; the misery and the massacres had produced none of the gains for which citizen Sade had worked. In his pessimism, his disgust and his rage at mankind, de Sade threw on to the booksellers' shelves those poisoned bombs, the ten volumes of *La Nouvelle Justine ou les Malheurs de la Vertu suivie de l'Histoire de Juliette sa soeur*. It is alleged that he had sets bound in white vellum and sent to each of the five Directors.

Whenever these books were written, they were published during the only five years of Christendom in which they could be openly sold. Despite the engravings which embellish the first edition and which stress exclusively the obscenity of the work, the books were apparently openly displayed; no copies were seized by the police over quite a long period. In 1801 Napoleon, or his ministers, had all the copies that could be found destroyed; and since that date his work has been almost continuously persecuted and burned. Organized authority has rightly recognized that de Sade was its inveterate enemy and has declared permanent war on his work and his ideas.

There is no record whether de Sade made any money by this publication; it was at once attributed to him, although his life long he officially denied the authorship with considerable vigour. Life became increasingly difficult for him; and in the autumn of 1798 he and Madame Quesnet could no longer afford to live together; he kept her son with him, living first with one of his farmers, and then in a barn at Versailles; Madame Quesnet - 'this angel sent to me from heaven' - tried to get work or help in Paris, even pawning her clothes to procure food. De Sade was glad to earn 40 sols a day working in the theatre at Versailles. His play *Oxtiern* was revived there and he acted the role of Fabrice, the innkeeper. A letter covering two copies of the play has been preserved; he begs the addressee to get the play performed at Chartres; he would be willing to act in it again, and in any case would come to supervise rehearsals.

His financial difficulties were increased by the pitiless actions of

his elder son; his health, already bad, deteriorated further; his sight became so bad that he could no longer see to write; and he was forced to spend three months of the winter of 1799-1800 in the public hospital (or workhouse) of Versailles, absolutely penniless, with only the food and clothes of charity, 'dying of hunger and cold'. When he was turned out from this refuge, he was in danger of being imprisoned for debt.

He had already in the July of the previous year been in communication with the Théâtre Français (not for the first time) urging them to perform his patriotic play *Jeanne Laisné or the Siege of Beauvais*. He seems to have had a particular fondness for this melodrama; he had given a reading of it, shortly after it was written, to the warders and establishment of the Bastille; and as late as 1813 he was again urging it on the Comédie. He was proud of the fact that he had gone to the original records to verify the heroine's name (she had formerly been known as Jeanne Hachette) and other details. The theatre refused it on the ground that Louis XI appeared on the stage; and a year later he appealed over their heads to his old protector the Conventionnel Goupilleau de Montaigu. This letter, coming from a once proud man, now sixty and destitute, has a rather tragic interest. It is too long to quote in full. After some rather fulsome compliments, he writes: 'You are all agreed, Citoyens Représentants, as are all good republicans, that it is extremely important to elevate the public spirit by good examples and good writing. My pen is said to have some energy, my philosophical novel, *Aline et Valcour*, has proved it; then I offer my talents to the service of the Republic, and offer them willingly. I was unhappy under the old régime, so you can understand that I must fear a return to an order of which I should inevitably be one of the first victims. The talents I offer to the Republic are disinterested; if a plan of work is laid down for me I will execute it, and I dare to say that it will be satisfactory. But I pray you, Citizen, put a stop to that horrible injustice, which is cooling for me the feelings with which I am warmed; why do they wish to give me cause for complaint against a government for which I would lay down a thousand lives if I had them? Why has all that I own been confiscated for the last two years, and why during that period have I been reduced to charity without in the least deserving such horrible treatment? Aren't people convinced that, instead of emigrating, I was occupied in all sorts of employment during the most terrible revolutionary years? Do I not possess the most authentic certificates possible? Then, if they are persuaded that I am innocent, why am I treated as guilty? Why do they try to force into the ranks of the enemies of the Republic one of its warmest and most zealous partisans? It seems to me such conduct is as unjust as it is impolitic.

'In any case, Citoyen Représentant, I offer my pen and my talents to the government; but do not let unfairness, poverty, and misery weigh on me any longer, and have me taken off the list [of émigrés],

I beg of you. Aristocrat or not, what difference does it make: have I ever acted like an aristocrat? Have I ever been known to share their conduct or their sentiments? My actions have destroyed the wrongs of my origin, and it is to that reason that I owe all the attacks that the royalists have made on me, especially Paulthier in his paper of the 12th Fructidor last;* but I despise them as I hate them

'In a word, Citizen, as a first sample of what I can offer I propose to you a tragedy in five acts, a work most competent to awaken in every heart love for their country'

This letter had no concrete result, nor had later demands for a reading of the play; but the spring of 1800 must have brought some relief, for he and Madame Quesnet returned to St. Ouen, from whence she later set out alone to Provence to try to get money from Gaufridy. The Marquis threatened the latter with lawsuits for the withholding of funds and, finally, Gaufridy resigned as steward.

In 1800 de Sade seems to have been active in his writing; his play *Oxtiern* was published, and a collection of his eleven long short stories under the title *Les Crimes de l'Amour*; this innocuous work was savagely attacked by a journalist named Villeterque, whom Sade counter-attacked in a brilliant pamphlet. He must have been busy, for in March 1801, when he was arrested in the offices of the publisher Massé, the manuscripts of four unpublished works were seized: *Le Boccace Français* (a rearrangement of his lighter unpublished short stories), *Les Conversations du château de Charmelle* (a first draft of *Les Journées de Florbelle*), and two works about which we know nothing except the titles: the *Délassements du libertin ou la Neuvaine de Cythère* (presumably a licentious work, since his younger son had it burned in 1832); and *Les Caprices, ou un peu de tout*, which is intriguingly described as an 'ouvrage politique.'

It is possibly the remembrance of this lost work which has led every biographer of de Sade to ascribe his arrest primarily to political and only secondly to moral, reasons. In 1864 a pamphlet published in 1801, entitled *Zoloé et ses deux acolytes*, was ascribed to de Sade; this made ponderous fun of Napoleon, Joséphine, and their chief associates in recognizable form, either by anagrammatic names or by detailed physical characteristics. It was thought that the First Consul was enraged at this impertinence, and used a trumped-up charge to punish the author. It was only when he was checking up every detail of de Sade's life in 1957, that Monsieur Lely found that there was no documentary justification for ascribing this pamphlet to de Sade; stylistically it never fitted in with the rest of his work.

Whatever may have been the contents of *Les Caprices*, no authoritarian government could allow the exposure of the mechanisms

* This journalist had made a savage attack on de Sade as the author of *Justine* on the basis of the inaccurate news of his death.

of despotism contained in *Justine* and *Juliette*; and it was on the grounds that they proposed to publish *Juliette*, 'an immoral and revolutionary work', that de Sade and his publisher were arrested. It is possible that this publisher had betrayed de Sade, and lured him into a trap; he was freed within twenty-four hours, after indicating the place where a new edition of a thousand copies of *La Nouvelle Justine* were hidden. Legal searches were made at the same time in a house of a friend of de Sade's, where nothing was found, and at Madame Quesnet's at Saint-Ouen; there the police discovered a secret cupboard with illustrations to *Justine* and an indecent tapestry. These were confiscated.

De Sade was confined in the ex-convent of Sainte-Pélagie, where Madame Quesnet was able to visit him three times in every ten days. His case never came up for hearing; in June 1802 he wrote to the Minister of Justice demanding that he be either tried or freed; legally he should have been tried within ten days of his arrest, yet he had been in prison fifteen months. It was apparently considered that a trial would cause too much public scandal; and his appeal was left unanswered.

In the spring of 1803 he provoked a scandal by soliciting or inciting some young blades who had created a scene at the Théâtre Français and were imprisoned for a few days in Sainte-Pélagie; as a result, de Sade was transferred for a month to Bicêtre; and then in April he was moved, for the last time of his life, to the asylum of Charenton, officially at the request of his family, who agreed to pay his keep. There are no documents to indicate whether this move was officially inspired or no. A number of Napoleon's enemies - the poet Désorgues, M. de Laage, Abbé Fournier are the best known - were similarly declared mad and shut up in asylums.

There is no question that de Sade was in fact insane; even the police stated that the only delirium of this 'incorrigible man' was that of 'démence libertine'. There was great fear of his publishing any of his writings; police made periodic searches of his room; in 1807 they seized the completed manuscript of an enormous work, *Les Journées de Florbelle* in which Louis XV, the Comte de Charolais, Cardinal Fleury, and other people de Sade may well have known appeared under their own names.

By a piece of great good fortune, the asylum of Charenton, which housed the insane of both sexes, was under the control of an exceptionally benevolent and able man, ex-Abbé Coulmier. It would seem that he understood and sympathized with de Sade; he made his life as agreeable for him as possible, allowing Madame Quesnet to visit him frequently, and even to live for a time in the hospital as a voluntary boarder; it would seem that he also allowed him to receive other visitors; and he stood up for him nobly against the attempted interference by the police. Even more important for de Sade's happiness, he allowed him to institute a theatre for the inmates. Occasionally, it appears, actors and actresses came in from

Paris; but more frequently the cast was found among the less disturbed of the inmates. De Sade was producer, elocution teacher, stage manager; he was even able to have the happiness of seeing some of his own plays acted.

The performances in the asylum became quite a social event. Guests came in from outside, though the issuing of the invitations was meant to depend entirely on the Director. There has been preserved, however, a letter from de Sade to one of the Ladies in Waiting to the Queen of Holland, asking how many seats she would desire for the performance of May 28th, 1810. Besides this lady, there were present the local mayors and curates, and other guests to the number of ninety, thirty hospital employees and sixty patients. On such evenings de Sade acted as producer and master of ceremonies. On special occasions, such as Dr. Coulmier's birthday, or the visit to the asylum of a notability such as the Cardinal Maury, de Sade composed special allegorical pieces or wrote a poem to be recited or sung for the occasion. The verses written for the visit of the Cardinal still exist; they are such as one might expect - as competent as a poet laureate would produce on a similar occasion, and equally untouched by poetry.

De Sade was still not free from persecution. In 1805 the Chief of Police objected to his having handed out the sacrament and taken the collection at Easter in the parish church! Presumably de Sade acted in this untypical fashion to please his friend and patron, the Abbé. In 1808 the doctor in charge of the whole hospital, Dr. Royer-Collard started (as far as we know) a long correspondence with the police, in which he violently attacked the comparative freedom of movement and communication granted to de Sade and demanded his removal to some fortress. It is difficult to tell from the few surviving letters whether this doctor was actually frightened of de Sade, or whether he was using him as a pawn in an institutional fight against his subordinate, Abbé Coulmier. In the letter of 1808 he attacked the play-acting by the patients as unorthodox and liable to bad effects (though it had been going on for some years he was not able to point to any harm done) and formally stated that de Sade was in no way mad, 'his only delirium being that of vice'. Coulmier was able for some years to parry this attack; he stated that he was a doctor, not a gaoler, and that de Sade was too ill to be moved; de Sade was also able to get some protection from a lady cousin who was friendly with Napoleonic ministers. The plays continued until May 1813; a year later Royer-Collard took Coulmier's place; and it was only de Sade's failing health, resulting in his death six months later, which saved him from being transferred to the Château d'If, or some such place.

In the earlier years he and Madame Quesnet made various appeals that he should either be tried or given his liberty; and in 1808 he made a vain appeal to Napoleon for his release. In this letter he said that he had spent over twenty years of the most miserable life

in the world in different prisons; and that he was now seventy (actually 68), nearly blind, crippled with gout and rheumatism in the chest and stomach which caused him terrible pain. There are very few personal letters dating from his time in Charenton; one in 1806 ends '*I am not happy* but I keep well. That is all I can say.' This letter, like nearly all his business preoccupations after he transferred his property to his family in exchange for an annuity, was concerned with securing Madame Quesnet's future.

He had one final brush with his family in 1808. His younger son planned to marry a very distant cousin; and de Sade refused to give his formal consent while he was in confinement. Rather than have his father released, this odious man used his mother's name (she was fat and blind and died two years later) to have de Sade declared 'civically dead' since his name was still on one list of émigrés. This son seems to have combined callousness, piety, prudery and pathological meanness in a most unpleasant amalgam; it was due to his insistence that so many of de Sade's manuscripts were burned many years after his death; and he tried to refuse to pay the debts owed to the asylum for his father's keep after his death. The elder son, who had distinguished himself in Napoleon's army and also started writing history, was killed in Germany in 1809; he died unmarried, as did his sister Laure, the latter at a ripe old age.

De Sade continued to be active in his writing. In 1804 he listed four books which have not survived: his *Confessions*, a *Réfutation de Fénelon* (which Monsieur Lely considers would have developed his arguments for atheism) and two historical novels, *Conrad*, a story of the Albigenes, and *Marcel or the Shoemaker*. In the last years of his life he wrote further historical novels: *La Marquise de Gange*, which was published anonymously in 1811, presumably thanks to Coulmier's help; and *Adelaide de Brunswick* and *Isabelle de Bavière*, the publication of which was being negotiated when he died. The manuscripts of these two novels remained in the de Sade family unpublished and unread until the last decade.

There are two vivid accounts of him in his old age; they depict him as quick-tempered as always, extremely courteous, very fat and white-haired, with the remains of grace in his movements, and occasional flashes from his dying eyes; we can picture him to some extent. There is no known surviving portrait of him; a miniature of him as a young man was lost in the Nazi sack of the de Sades' château in 1941. The only description of him as a young man is the rather summary one of the witnesses in the Marseille law-suit, where he is described as shorter than his servant, fair-haired and rather plump. He was then smartly dressed and wore his sword.

There are a number of official descriptions, like passport details, of his features in official documents of 1793 and 1794; though they differ in minor details, they give his height as five foot two inches, his hair and eyebrows as grey-blond (or grey), a high and

open forehead, pale blue eyes, average nose, small mouth, round chin, face a full oval.

The imaginary portraits which have been reproduced so often depict de Sade as a willowy, hollow-eyed, romantic brunette; they are wrong in every particular. He was a plump little bantam, with his fair hair, blue eyes and tiny mouth, a physical type which in England is found fairly often among military martinets.

De Sade died on December 2nd, 1814, at the age of seventy-four, the cause of his death being given as 'pulmonary congestion'. His younger son was with him but not, inexplicably, Madame Quesnet. The malice of either his heir or of Dr. Royer-Collard may have been to blame.

Eight years earlier he had made his will. The greater part of this document was concerned with assuring, by all possible legal means, Madame Quesnet's legacies; the last paragraph read:

I expressly forbid my body to be opened under any consideration soever. I ask with the greatest emphasis that my body shall be kept for forty-eight hours in the room I shall die in, placed in a wooden coffin which shall only be nailed down on the expiration of the time mentioned; during this interval an express messenger shall be sent to sieur Lenormand, wood merchant at Versailles, to pray him to come himself accompanied with a wagon to fetch my body to be transported under his escort to the wood on my property at Malmaison in the commune of Mance near Epernon, where I wish it to be placed, without any sort of ceremony, in the first thicket on the right in the said wood, entering from the direction of the old château by the large road which divides the wood. My grave shall be dug in the thicket by the Malmaison farmer under the inspection of M. Lenormand, who will only leave my body after it has been placed in the said grave; if he wishes he can be accompanied in this ceremony by those of my relations and friends who, without mourning of any sort, will have the kindness to show me this last mark of attachment. Once the grave has been filled it shall be sown over with acorns so that subsequently the said grave being replanted and the thicket being tangled as before, the traces of my tomb may disappear from the face of the earth, as I flatter myself that my memory will be wiped away from the minds of men, save those few whose affection for me has continued to the last and of whom I take a pleasant memory to the grave.

Made at Charenton-Saint-Maurice, while of sound mind and body, January 30th 1806.

(signed) D.A.F. SADE

Even in death he was thwarted. The only testamentary wish granted was that no autopsy should be performed on his body. The passionate atheist was given Christian burial, and a simple stone

cross placed on his grave. Some years later his grave was opened and his skull claimed by phrenologists. One practitioner thought that his skull resembled that of a father of the church; another that 'it might be taken for a woman's head, especially as the bumps of tenderness and love of children are as prominent as in the head of Héloïse, that model of tenderness and love'.

Literary Work

The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life. — ST. PAUL
The Second Letter to the People of Corinth

I must create a system or be enslaved by another Man's;
 I will not reason and compare; my business is to create.
 — W. BLAKE
Jerusalem

I — LITERARY PRINCIPLES

AMONG the last pieces of writing from de Sade's pen that have come down to us is an *Essay on the Novel* which he wrote as a preface to *Les Crimes de l'Amour*, a collection of eleven of the tragic and dramatic short stories (their length almost allows them to be called short novels) from his projected *Contes et Fabliaux du Dixhuitième Siècle par un Troubadour Provençal*, which he had written in 1787. This Essay, written and published in 1800, when nearly all his major work was written, is of considerable interest, for not only does it give his ideas on the function and art of the novel, and fiction generally, but is also a tacit criticism and justification of his own work. The fact that he formally denies the authorship of *Justine* therein is of no importance; at the date of writing it was the only policy.

He starts by sketching the origin of the novel. Deriding those people who would seek an origin in one country or in one people, he places the origin of fiction in two ingrained human weaknesses — prayer and love. The first fiction arose when the first religion was invented. Man's mythopoeic faculties were first occupied with gods, then demi-gods and finally heroes. Somewhat later ideal and lyrical love-stories were written. He glances over the novels of the Romans and Greeks — incidentally he states that Petronius' *Satyricon* should not be considered a novel; he shared with his contemporaries the idea that it was a personal satire on Nero — to consider in greater detail the productions of Christian Europe, and especially France. Neither the chansons de geste nor the fabliaux can be considered as real novels, though the latter came nearer to being so; it was only when gallantry was added to observation that the novel was born. Almost at once the novel reached its apogee — *Don Quixote* is

for him the best novel ever written. He also rates very highly the *Princesse de Clèves* of Madame de Lafayette, mentioning in passing the absurd supposition that being a woman she must have had help from men to make a masterpiece; women, he says, are more fitted to novel-writing than men, owing to their greater delicacy. His judgments on the French novels of the eighteenth century are so just and so much in accordance with the accepted taste of today that they do not need repeating; he gives Voltaire and Rousseau their just praise, and takes to task Crébillon, Tancrède, and their followers – writers who are considered typically ‘eighteenth century’ – for their immorality. From these he excepts Prévost, whom he admires very much.

He then turns to the English novel. ‘Richardson and Fielding’, he says,¹ taught us that only the profound study of man’s heart, nature’s maze, and that alone can inspire the novelist whose work shows us not only the man as he is or pretends to be – that is the historian’s task – but as he can be, as he is influenced by vice and all passion’s shocks; so that one must know and employ them all to use that style; they taught us, too, that virtue’s continual triumph is not always interesting. . . .’ He adds that virtue is only one of the heart’s phases.

He then deals with the ‘Gothic’ novel.² ‘Then there are the new novels, nearly whose whole merit lies in magic and phantasmagoria, with the *Monk* at their head, which are not entirely without merit; they are the fruit of the revolution of which all Europe felt the shock. For him who knows the misery the wicked can inflict on mankind the novel became as difficult to write as it was boring to read; there was no one who did not undergo more misfortunes in five years than the best novelist could describe in a century; therefore hell had to be called in to help and interest, to find in nightmare merely what one knew ordinarily just by glancing over the history of man in this age of iron. But how many inconveniences this style offers; the author of the *Monk* has not avoided them any more than Radcliffe [*sic*]; there is the alternative of explaining the magic trickery, and then there is no more interest, or else of never lifting the curtain, which causes complete lack of verisimilitude. If a successful work appeared without being wrecked on either point, far from blaming the means employed we would offer it as a model.’ It is hardly open to doubt that in this paragraph he is explaining his own intentions in his major works, particularly *Justine*.

After his historical survey he makes some general considerations on the novel. He defines it as ‘the picture of contemporary manners’ – *le tableau des mœurs séculaires* – and claims that it can be as useful as history to the philosopher; the one shows the façade, the other the whole man.

He then proceeds to give advice to other writers. ‘The most essential knowledge is certainly that of the heart of man, to be learned by misfortune and travel: one must have seen men of all

nations to know them and one must have been their victim to appreciate them; misfortune's hand, in exalting the character of him whom it crushes puts him at the right distance to study men; he sees them there as the traveller sees the furious waves break against the rock on which the storm has thrown him; but in whatever situation nature or chance has placed him let him keep quiet when he is with other men; one doesn't learn by speaking but by listening; which is why chatterers are usually fools.³

The only rule is verisimilitude. Descriptions of places, unless imaginary, should be exact. It is not necessary to keep to the original plan, for ideas that come in the course of writing are just as useful, provided the interest is kept up. Incidents – the short story inserted into the body of the main work was still general when this was written – must be even better than the main body to justify themselves. An author should never moralize, though his characters may. But above everything don't write unless you have to; if you need money make boots and we will respect you as a competent cobbler; if you write for money your work will show it.

Finally he justifies himself against the attacks made on *Aline et Valcour*. 'I don't want to make vice amiable; unlike Crébillon and Dorat I don't wish to make women adore their deceivers but to loathe them. . . . I have made my heroes who follow the career of vice so loathsome that they will surely inspire neither pity nor love; thereby I make bold to say I become more moral than those who allow themselves "toning down"';⁴ and in an outburst of justifiable pride he adds, '*We, too, we know how to create.*'

Even a work as innocuous as this was not allowed to go without detractors. An otherwise unknown journalist, Villetterque, filled a column in attacking de Sade as advocating crime and immorality; in an extremely witty and spirited reply de Sade justifies himself, analysing his essay and stories; he applies the Aristotelean canon of purging by pity and terror and asks, 'From what can *terror* spring, save from pictures of crime triumphant, or *pity* save from virtue in distress?'⁵

II – MISCELLANEOUS WORKS

DE SADE'S literary production falls into two broad categories: those intended for the general reader, and on which he hoped to build his literary fame; and those clandestine works which he formally disavowed during his lifetime, written chiefly for himself, and of which he said 'I only address myself to those capable of understanding me; such people can read me without danger.' Ironically enough, it is on his clandestine works that his reputation has rested for the greater part of two centuries; had all that he wrote survived and been published, the public category would have been far the larger.

De Sade wrote in practically every conceivable style; it seems

convenient to discuss his work under three broad categories: theatrical work; essays; and fiction. He wrote a little non-theatrical verse; but what has survived has so little poetic merit that it seems kinder to pass it over in silence.

Of the eighteen plays of which we know the titles, only one, *Oxtiern*, was published in his lifetime; the manuscripts of fourteen remain in the possession of the Marquis Xavier de Sade, and three seem to be lost. Monsieur Lely has examined the plays in manuscript, and printed short extracts from them in the second volume of his *Vie de Marquis de Sade*; it seems unlikely that any more of them will be published. For de Sade's theatrical work seems to be almost completely without merit; the plays are written in mechanical and technically imperfect verse (predominantly rhymed alexandrines), the characters stereotyped and the plots improbable. This was a period when the theatre in France – indeed in the whole of Europe – was at a very low ebb; but even by the poor contemporary standard de Sade's plays are at best undistinguished. What is curious is that de Sade thought more highly of his plays than of any other of his writings; the possible reasons for this will be discussed later.*

His essays and nonfictional work are almost all lost. Of some, such as the political work *Les Caprices ou un peu de tout* or the atheist *Réfutation de Fénelon* we know only the titles; and of the four-volume miscellany *Le Portefeuille d'un Homme de Lettres* there remains little more than a summary of the contents and some short excerpts. It was written as an extended correspondence between a gentleman in Paris and two young ladies in the country, and covered a very wide range of subjects from the art of writing a comedy to the etymology of words; there was a dissertation on the death penalty, a plan to employ criminals in such a way that they should be useful to the State, historical excerpts, a letter on luxury and another on education, treating forty-four points of morality. The letter on playwriting contained fifty rules which would give all the necessary guidance for success in this art. The more serious subjects were diversified with anecdotes; Maurice Heine published eleven of these. They are amusing and well-written, quite a number of them bawdy in the humorous 'gaulois' style – almost the last things one would have expected from de Sade's pen. A couple of the anecdotes deal with well-attested local ghost stories.

The manuscript of this miscellany was ready for the publisher when it was lost or stolen at the taking of the Bastille. It is difficult to see how so very wide a range of subjects could have been successfully held together within the framework of a fictional correspondence, but it is a work whose loss I personally deplore; it would have been most interesting to have exact statements of de Sade's views on such subjects as education and penal reform, instead of having to deduce them from his surviving works.

I regret even more the loss of the thirteen volumes of his

* See Chapter Nine, pp. 173–92.

Journal, 1777-1790, of which eleven volumes remained with the de Sade family until the pillage of the château in 1941 without, as far as is known, anybody ever having read them; and the *Confessions*, drawn from them, of which the manuscript was apparently confiscated by the police at Charenton, some time after 1804, when they are mentioned in his *Notebooks*. Five volumes of these jottings, excerpts, and miscellaneous pieces of writing existed in the nineteenth century; two of them survive, and Gilbert Lely published excerpts from them under the title *Cahiers personnels* (1803-1804).

Mention was made in the previous chapter of most of the eight surviving political pamphlets which de Sade published between 1791 and 1793.

Although never intended for publication, de Sade's private correspondence cannot be passed over in silence. His qualities as a letter writer are outstanding; in these spontaneous effusions he achieves all the vivacity, the fantasy, the gamut of moods and emotions, the grace and eloquence which always escaped him as a playwright. The verve and elegance of the language make them unsuitable for excerpting in translation; the three selections of intimate letters which Monsieur Lely has published, under the titles *L'Aigle*, *Mademoiselle . . .*; *Le Carillon de Vincennes*, and *Monsieur le 6* can provide as much literary as documentary pleasure.

De Sade's epistolary skill is demonstrated in *Aline et Valcour*, his most substantial avowed work of fiction, which will be considered at length in the next section. He wrote at least five other novels in the last decades of his life, one of which, *La Marquise de Gange*, was published anonymously during his lifetime. This is an historical novel, based on a criminal case which occurred in the reign of Louis XIV, the murder of a chaste and beautiful woman by her avaricious and criminal brothers-in-law. Of the remaining novels, two are only known to us by their titles: *Conrad ou Le Jaloux en délire*, a story of the Albigenes, and *Marcel ou le Cordelier*, about which nothing is known. Two manuscripts are preserved in the de Sade family: *L'Histoire secrète d'Isabelle de Bavière, Reine de France* (Isabelle of Bavaria was the wife of Charles VI) and *Adelaide de Brunswick*, princess of Saxony, a tale of the eleventh century. The former of these was edited by Gilbert Lely and published for the first time in 1953; the second has never appeared in French, but was published in a very limited edition in a translation by Professor Hobart Ryland of the University of Kentucky in 1954. I have not seen a copy of this.

I am debarred from any discussion of de Sade's historical novels by the fact that this is a genre of fiction which I am quite unable to appreciate; even the most highly esteemed reduce me to boredom. It would seem however that the two novels I have read, the *Marquise de Gange* and *Isabelle de Bavière*, are perfectly adequate examples of their style; the two heroines are interesting historical echoes of the beautiful, pious and persecuted Justine, and the

beautiful, cruel, lustful, and criminal Juliette. *Isabelle de Bavière* is supported by documentary footnotes; de Sade claims that he had examined the manuscripts of the interrogation of her lover and accomplice, Bois-Bourdon, in the Carthusian convent at Dijon in 1764. These manuscripts were destroyed during the Revolution. By going to the sources for the documentation of historical novels, de Sade seems to have been a precursor; I know of no contemporary who did this; *Waverley* was published in the year of his death.

The *Contes et Fabliaux d'un Troubadour Provençal du XVIII^e siècle*, ready for publication in 1788, consisted of thirty short stories, a serious or tragic one followed by a humorous one, in a lighter vein. This collection was never published in this form; but eleven of the dramatic and tragic tales appeared in 1800 in four small volumes under the title *Les Crimes de l'Amour*. The lighter pieces were arranged into another collection called *Le Boccace Français*, the manuscript of which was seized by the police in 1801, at de Sade's arrest. Some of these survived (presumably as second manuscript copies), and fourteen of them were published by Maurice Heine in 1926, together with eleven of the anecdotes intended to be inserted into *Le Portefeuille d'un Homme de Lettres*; seventeen short stories and anecdotes are only known by their titles. One story, *Dorci*, was edited by Anatole France and published in 1881.

The greater part of de Sade's heroic and dramatic stories have an exotic setting, either distant in time – historical episodes – or in space; one story is set in Sweden, a second in England, a third in Italy. They seem to be fairly meticulous in their search for local colour. The plots are similar to those of his plays – indeed he frequently treated the same story both dramatically and as narrative; the style is sober and economical – though, as in nearly all his works, bespattered with fixed epithets and mechanical similes of the order of 'beautiful as a rose'; and the climaxes dramatic. Virtue is not often triumphant; but, as in the historical novels, it is depicted as worthy of respect and emulation; vice is made properly loathsome.

The humorous stories are much slighter; they are chiefly surprising in that they show in de Sade a sense of humour and gaiety that could never have been suspected from the rest of his published work (they are echoed in a few of his letters, notably in those to the manservant La Jeunesse, facetiously addressed as Don Quiros); they have an epigrammatic neatness which would give the author an honourable place among his lighter contemporaries. I give two short quotations as samples of this style:

'There is a sort of pleasure for one's pride in making fun of faults that one doesn't possess oneself, and such pleasures are so sweet to all men, and particularly to fools, that it is extremely uncommon to see them given up . . . also this gives an opportunity for spiteful remarks, faded jokes and flat puns, and for "society" – that is to say a collection of people whom boredom brings together and stupidity

modifies – it is so pleasant to talk for two or three hours without saying anything, so delicious to shine at others' expense and to mention and blame vices one is far from having . . . it is a sort of tacit self-praise; for this people even consent to join together, to unite to crush the person whose great crime consists in not thinking like the rest; then they can go home mightily pleased with the wit they have shown, when, clearly, they have merely demonstrated their stupidity and their pedantry.⁶

The second quotation comes from the story quoted several times in the previous chapter, *The Mystified Magistrate* (*Le Président Mystifié*), in which de Sade mocked his judges and the legal profession of his in-laws. It is by far the longest of his humorous stories and very spirited; the backbone which holds the different incidents together is that old hardy perennial of French farce, the prevention of the consummation of a marriage. The magistrate, who has been made drunk, is giving his profession of faith in his office; unfortunately it is beyond my wit to translate the pun. 'Dame, voyez-vous' he says, 'J'aime les moeurs, j'aime la tempérance et la sobriété, tout ce qui choque ces deux vertus me révolte et je sévis; il faut être sévère la sévérité est la fille de la justice . . . et la justice est la mère de . . . je vous demande pardon, madame, il y a des moments où quelquefois la mémoire me fait faux bond . . . – Oui, oui, c'est juste, répondit la folle marquise . . .'⁷

Halfway between the books addressed to the public at large and the clandestine books comes the short work *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*. A third of its pages are taken up with the long and important political pamphlet, *Frenchmen, a further effort if you wish to be Republicans*, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 6; this is bold in its ideas but circumspect in its language; the pamphlet was indeed reprinted and circulated as propaganda for the Commune in 1848. The setting in which it is placed consists of a highly erotic (but save in the last episode, not cruel) story of the sexual and moral enfranchisement of a young girl, similar to the plot of *Aloisia Sigea* and a number of other pornographic books. The story is told in dialogue form; there are six other actors besides the girl, much of the action being indicated by stage directions. The action takes place during a single afternoon; the fifteen-year-old heroine being transformed during this period from a lively but conventional schoolgirl into a bacchant free from all prejudices, her conventional beliefs and scruples having been as completely destroyed as all her virginities. De Sade's intellectual attitudes are typically displayed in the discussions; but this is the only work of his which might be considered pornographic in the customary sense. One of the first French writers to take de Sade seriously, H. d'Alméras, thought it was not de Sade's work, probably because it is unworthy of him; but the ascription is in no doubt; if an excuse be needed, it can be found in his complete poverty at the time of writing.

Indeed, he thought highly of this work, making one of his characters read it in *Juliette*; and he apparently picked up some of the themes and characters again in the lost *Journées de Florebelle*. This was a work which de Sade must have thought very important; for, after the first manuscript, under the title *Les Conversations du Château de Charmelle*, was seized by the police at the publisher's in 1801, he wrote it all again at Charenton before the 117 notebooks, which would have made ten volumes, were again seized by the police in 1807; the manuscript was burned at his son's request some years after de Sade's death; and only the barest skeleton and a few notes have come down to us.

It seems as though the major portion of the book was another series of dialogues, mingled with debaucheries; the characters included Louis XV, Cardinal de Fleury, Comte de Charolais, Marshal Soubise, and other people very recently dead. A large part of the work was to be taken up with discussions of religion; and about half of it was given over to the life-stories of Abbé de Modose and Emilie de Volnange. Its destruction probably represents the greatest gap in our knowledge of de Sade's ideas and views of the world.

Of the other manuscript seized by the police at his publisher's, and also burned at the request of de Sade's son in 1832, we know nothing but the title: *Les Délassements du libertin ou la Neuvaïne de Cythère*.

III - ALINE ET VALCOUR

I HAD hoped that in this criticism of de Sade's works I should be able to dispense with the necessity of detailing the plots, referring any readers who might be curious to the books already published about him. The remainder of his books have been dealt with at length, but *Aline et Valcour* has, as far as I know, only been carefully considered once in a work published in a small limited edition in 1901; later writers have been content with the merest caricature of a summary and a regretful remark to the effect that the book contains no obscenities, and with the exception of one poisoning and a few flagellations, no scenes of cruelty. It is possible however for a book to have interest, even with the exclusion of these two subjects. I am forced, therefore, to give a rather long account of it.

It is really three completely distinct novels, linked together by rather slight threads of a secondary intrigue. The main book (occupying the first and fourth volumes) is a dramatic and tragic story told in letters; the second volume is an account of a symbolical voyage, somewhat in the style of Swift; the third volume is an adventure story. For convenience I shall refer to these different parts as the story of Aline and Valcour, the story of Sainville, and the story of Leonora respectively.

The story of Aline and Valcour is told in letters and was undoubtedly influenced by Richardson. A poor young man, Valcour, is in love with Aline, the daughter of the Magistrate de Blamont. Aline loves him in return and his suit is favoured by her mother, a charming woman and a sincere Christian. These three are all honourable people, governed by their heart rather than by their head, sentimental, virtuous, religious, and stupid. Aline's father disapproves of the match owing to its imprudence; he has found for his daughter a thoroughly acceptable husband in the financier Dolburg, a rich man already three times widowed, a friend of de Blamont's and his companion in debauchery. Aline, however, is constant in her love, and seconded by her mother uses every possible device to postpone the arranged wedding. De Blamont, infuriated by this resistance, uses all his powers to cause the wedding to take place.

The scene is set for the conflict. On one side there is sentiment, honour, religion – the heart; on the other the intellect which acknowledges no laws but those of reason, no prejudices, no tacit agreements. The heart is bound to lose, for it considers itself bound by conventions and decencies at which the intellect laughs.

The action is straightforward. When all legal means of forcing his daughter to the marriage have been foiled either by Madame de Blamont or friends, de Blamont tries to have the girl kidnapped. This too fails, as does an attempt to bribe Valcour to renounce his claims, and a subsequent attempt to have him assassinated. De Blamont therefore decides to isolate the girl, removing by one device or another all her friends, and finally causing her mother to be poisoned by a servant he had seduced. Alone and powerless, the girl is taken to a distant property of her father's, where she is held a prisoner by her father and Dolburg. Escape is impossible, all her appeals for pity are dismissed; in complete despair the girl commits suicide.

The book is extremely well written. The characters and beliefs of the different actors are excellently revealed in their letters; the emotion is continually and carefully heightened, and the climax handled with considerable restraint and deep feeling. Unfortunately there is a sub-plot, concerned with a lost elder daughter of Madame de Blamont, which, although it helps the intrigue (it is the excuse for the introduction of the two other novels) and serves to reveal de Blamont's character, is the cause of a great deal of diffuseness, and is probably the chief reason for the book never having been accorded its due. Slightly pruned, the novel could stand against any other product of its country and century.

The dominating figure of the whole book is de Blamont, the prototype of the 'sadistic' villain. Although he only writes six of the seventy odd letters of which the book is formed, his shadow is cast on every page. He is a materialist, an intellectual, guided entirely by his own pleasures and advantage; he has worked out a philo-

sophy to justify his conduct. He gives an impression of deathly coldness. Even his debauches and atrocities heighten that impression. In face of his single-minded, unscrupulous, cold determination the rest of the characters are like birds trying to escape from a snake. He is one of the most terrifying characters ever created, the more so as we see him chiefly through the eyes of his victims. Although de Sade's other works abound in far greater monsters their very number and the lack of contrast lessen their effect.

The story of Sainville is completely different. It is an account of a voyage, but such a voyage as only Gullivers make. It is principally concerned with two countries, Butua on the Gold Coast, and Tamoe, somewhere in the South Seas. In the preface de Sade says, 'Nobody as yet has penetrated to Butua . . . save the author. . . . If with the more agreeable fictions of Tamoe he tries to console his readers for the cruel truths he has been obliged to paint in Butua, should we blame him?' Although nobody perhaps has penetrated to Butua, we all live in it; for, by a curious coincidence, he has adopted the same device as Dame Edith Sitwell for exposing existing civilization in the symbols of African barbarity; and though he nowhere approaches the level of *Gold Coast Customs*, one of the finest poems of this century, he produces effects and contrasts which are not unworthy of the comparison. In Tamoe, de Sade has painted his Utopia. This volume will be analysed in subsequent chapters.

The story of Leonora is the longest of the three, the most full of incident, and the dullest. The young lady is kidnapped and goes through adventure after adventure all over the world before returning home. She is a most disagreeable character, cheating and lying, using her beauty to lead men on and extort favours and help from them with promises she has never any intention of fulfilling. She manages to preserve her virtue through all dangers. She has somewhat unjustly been compared with Juliette; but the latter paid for what she got: she wasn't that sort of cheat. In Spain, Leonora undergoes some of the vicissitudes which later afflict the unhappy Justine – the cut-throat inn, the murderous monks, the band of beggars. Some of the incidents and minor characters are of great interest; the salient points will be dealt with as occasion arises.

In several different places de Sade prophesies the imminence of the Revolution. The book was twice suppressed in the early nineteenth century as being politically subversive.

IV – 'LES 120 JOURNÉES,' 'JUSTINE' ET 'JULIETTE'

FROM every point of view *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* is one of the most extraordinary books in the world. Even its history is peculiar. The manuscript we possess is a single roll of paper about thirteen yards long and not quite five inches wide, covered on both sides

by an almost microscopical writing (in print the work covers nearly 500 pages of royal quarto); this was written by de Sade in thirty-seven evenings, writing from seven to ten every night, starting August 20th, 1785, in the Bastille. On his removal from there the manuscript was lost, or stolen, and came into the possession of a French family where it remained for over a century. Then a hundred and twenty years after its composition it was published by Dr. Ivan Bloch ('Eugène Dühren') in a very limited edition; a second and corrected edition was started in Paris in 1931, and completed in 1937.

And yet this monstrous work – perhaps 250,000 words – is the merest skeleton of what was originally intended. It was to be in four parts, preceded by an introduction and followed by an epilogue; but except for the introduction and the first part, which have been fairly fully developed, it is only in the form of detailed notes. We shall probably never know whether de Sade used this canvas to write the complete book. As with *The Castle* of Kafka we have only the fragment of the intended whole; and these two fragments, utterly opposed as they are in every way, can both be qualified as masterpieces.

The central portion of the book is a description of every form of sexual perversion, to the number of six hundred, 'expressly excluding all the pleasures allowed or forbidden by that brute of which you talk ceaselessly, without knowing it, and which you call nature.'⁸

This portion of the book is the first *psychopathia sexualis*; it was the better part of a century before the subject was treated again by scientists; and a further century's researches have not significantly added to the list of perversions and deviations which de Sade observed in his brief years of freedom or evoked from his unconscious wishes and conscious experiments. His list of course is over-extended by his desire for numerical symmetry. Bestiality can, for example, count as one (or two) perversions; or it can be extended to include a considerable number if the different activities which can be engaged in be listed for each farmyard animal in turn. There probably do exist people with an exclusive passion for goats or greyhounds ('love me, love my dog'); but this level of particularity is opposed to the principle of generalization which informs the greater part of the work. Despite this somewhat excessive proliferation, the list is an astounding piece of work for the time and place; and Dr. Bloch was undoubtedly justified in claiming a very high place for it as a scientific document.

These perversions were to be described by four old women, who were to place them in the stories of their lives, thus giving four detailed life histories with their economic and social background.

These historians were to recount the perversions, to the number of five every evening, during a four-month orgy, lasting from the

end of October till the beginning of March, to four excessively debauched war-profiters, their four wives, and their harem of twenty-eight subjects of every age and sex in a lonely and desolate medieval castle in Switzerland. During the four months the development of the thirty-six characters and their mutual interaction were to be described.

The introduction sets the scene and give elaborate physical and mental portraits of the actors. This portrait gallery is an astounding performance, as a piece of writing hardly ever equalled. They are monstrous figures, well over life size, painted with extreme naturalism, yet crystallized to an individuality the naturalist school never attained. De Sade is absolutely merciless; we are not spared a single wrinkle, a single sore, unpleasant smell or habit, not a single meanness or treachery; no detail of cowardice or filth is hidden. But the canvas is not monotonous; religion and beauty are there too, childishness and romanticism; the whole gamut of human possibilities are exhibited in their extremest development.

The work starts off with a thunderclap. 'The extensive wars which Louis XIV had to wage in the course of his reign, which ruined the State's finances and the people's faculties, none-the-less found the secret of enriching an enormous quantity of those bloodsuckers who are always on the look out for public calamities, which they engender instead of appeasing, in the direct intention of thereby making greater profits. . . . It was at the end of this reign . . . that four of these contractors imagined the singular party of debauchery we are going to describe. It would be a mistake to imagine that only business people took part in this malpractice, it had at its head very great gentlemen indeed. The Duke de Blangis and his brother the bishop had both made enormous fortunes by these means, and are sufficient proof that the aristocracy did not disdain this method of making a fortune, any more than other people. These two illustrious persons, intimately bound by pleasure and interest to the financier Durcet and the Judge de Curval, were the first to imagine the debauch we are going to describe; they communicated it to their two friends and these four formed the principal actors of those famous orgies.'

This single paragraph gives a good sample of de Sade's social criticism. It is no accident that his four villains are representatives of the four groups which embody law and order.

This very slight sketch will give some notion of the scale on which the work is planned. Details of the plot can be found in the books mentioned at the end of the chapter.

De Sade was driven by two motives to write this work. The first was undoubtedly scientific; as he himself writes:¹⁰ 'Men already so different from one another in all their other manias and in all their tastes, are even more so sexually, and he who could fix and detail these perversions would accomplish one of the finest works on morals one could wish for, and perhaps one of the most

interesting.' In *Justine* he offers a similar explanation. 'But shall we not wear out our reader's patience in describing new atrocities?' he asks. 'Have we not already sufficiently soiled their imaginations with tales of filth? Should we hazard new ones? - Hazard, hazard, replies the philosopher. People don't realize how important these pictures are to the soul's development; our great ignorance of this science is only due to the stupid modesty of those wont to write on such matters. Held in by absurd fears they only tell us of puerilities that every fool knows and do not dare to lay hands fearlessly on the human heart and portray its gigantic divagations. We will obey since philosophy commands and will fear no more to paint vice naked.'¹¹ His sincerity cannot be doubted; it is only his lack of a polysyllabic vocabulary which makes him scientifically suspect today.

The second motive which actuates this work is a misanthropy unequalled in human history. Lear and Timon are but pale shadows compared to de Sade at this epoch. His aim is no less than to strip every covering, both mental and physical, off man and expose him to our disgusted gaze as the mean and loathsome creature he is. It is the supreme blasphemy. Our gods you may attack, individuals you may show to be monsters, but to attack the human race is unforgivable.

In this work the blasphemy reaches Mephistophelean heights. Curval complains that there are only two or three crimes to commit. 'How many times,' he cries, 'Have I not wished that I could catch the sun and deprive the world of it, or use it to burn up the earth?''¹² Never again did de Sade reach this pitch; though when the Revolution falsified all the hopes he had set on it he drew near the same level in *La Nouvelle Justine*. He allows himself to make paradoxical moralizing asides; 'If crime has not the delicacy of virtue, has it not ceaselessly a character of grandeur and sublimity that surpasses and will always surpass the monotonous and effeminate features of the latter?''¹³ And again, 'Beauty is simple, ugliness extraordinary.'¹⁴

The whole book was conceived as an act of defiance against God and Christian morality. The plan of the book demands a gradual increasing revelation of human wickedness, ending up in a series of more and more revolting murders; but his four debauchees, if they are to be consistently described, are not going to restrain themselves to the comparatively simple pleasures revealed in the earlier evenings. This dilemma forces de Sade to keep some of their actions and ideas in temporary concealment, lest their premature disclosure interrupt the planned development. On one of these occasions de Sade adds 'Since these gentlemen did not explain themselves any further, we cannot tell what they meant. And even if we did know, I think that we should do better to keep it modestly veiled, for there are all sorts of things which should only be hinted at, prudence and circumspection both demand it, one might shock chaste ears,

and I am completely persuaded that the reader is already grateful for all the modesty with which we treat him, and the further he reads, the more we shall merit his sincere praises on this worthy head. We can almost promise him this already, anyhow whatever anyone says, everyone has his soul to save, and what punishment in this world and the next would be adequate for the man who, without any restraint, would, for example, entertain himself by revealing all the caprices, all the tastes and all the secret horrors which men experience in the fire of their imagination – to do this would be to reveal secrets which should be buried for the happiness of mankind, it would mean undertaking the general corruption of morals, and precipitating his brothers in Christ Jesus in all the misbehaviour such descriptions might excite, and God Who sees the secret of our hearts, that powerful God Who made heaven and earth and Who must judge us one day, He knows whether we wish to hear Him reproach us with such crimes.’¹⁵ After this aside the book goes on to describe some particularly nauseating variations of coprophagy.

De Sade realized the unique quality of this work. At the end of the Introduction he calls on his friend the reader ‘to prepare your heart and spirit for the most impure tale that has ever been written since the world exists, such a book existing neither among the ancients nor the moderns’.¹⁶ As Maurice Heine has pointed out with considerable perspicacity, when de Sade lost the manuscript (?manuscripts) of this work he lost his masterpiece, and knew it; and it is probably due to the vain effort to repair this loss, from the scientific point of view, that we get the numerous obscenities in the final edition of *Justine* and *Fuliette*. The account of the monastery Sainte-Marie-des-Bois in *La Nouvelle Justine* in particular seems to be a vain effort to reconstitute the lost work.

In contrast with the fragmentary remains of *Les 120 Journées* we have no less than four complete versions of *Justine*, written over a space of ten years. The first version, *Les Infortunes de la Vertu*, is the original rough draft; it is a long short story written in a fortnight in 1787, and was never intended by the author for publication. It was transcribed from the manuscript by Maurice Heine in 1930. This manuscript was worked over, corrected and expanded by the author in his usual fashion during the following year, and a version *Justine, ou les Malheurs de la Vertu* was published soon after de Sade’s release, in 1791, in two volumes. The following year it was brought out again by another publisher with slight alterations – the chief being that it is his mother, and no longer his aunt, that the homosexual de Bressac hates and wishes to have killed, psychologically an important change. This version had a considerable success in the ten following years. Although the sexual element is present, none of the first three versions can be considered obscene. Finally in 1797 the book was entirely re-written and expanded to more than double its size, largely by the inclusion of the adventures

of two minor characters; probability is destroyed, the natural development is lost, the story is drowned in a deluge of blood and semen.

The basic fable is the same throughout all the versions; it is the story of a young girl left suddenly without resources who tries to make her way through life following the precepts of religion in which she believes completely, and the misfortunes and discomforts she undergoes. In its original conception it was almost certainly meant to be an ironical tale in the style of Voltaire – *Zadig* is indeed quoted on the first page; it was to be as it were a pendant to *Candide*, the story of the chaste but unfortunate Cunegonde. Justine was to pass from the hands of one extraordinary character to another's, a miser's, a homosexual's, a coiner's, a vegetarian and a temperance reformer's. In every case the exercise of some Christian virtue, chiefly pity or charity of the negative absention from crime, was to land her in one predicament after another. The final moral was to be – not 'cultivate your garden,' but 'learn how to correct the caprices of fortune' – *anglice* 'God helps those who help themselves.'

But almost immediately de Sade saw that this subject necessitated more serious treatment, for he was not attacking a minor, foolishly optimistic, philosophy, but the whole basis of Christianity and the Christian conception of human nature. Christianity assumed that gratitude, remorse, a natural leaning towards gratuitous kindness and charity were fundamentals of human behaviour in a Christian country, and that there was a providence which especially looked after the good and pious. De Sade intended to show how unfounded such assumptions were, how worldly success was only to be obtained by a façade of virtue combined with a strict attention to business unalloyed by scruples or unnecessary honesty, and how indifferent was providence to the characters of the people it struck through its instrument nature, Justine is killed by lightning.

So from being the *Candide* of Christianity *Justine* became the *Don Quixote*. The parallel is very close. Both protagonists believe in a state of affairs and a humanity which in fact do not exist; both prefer to stick to their delusions rather than to learn from experience, and in consequence go from one disastrous and ridiculous situation to another, finally dying in misery, still convinced that their vision of the world is a true one. Justine is consoled by her assurance that she is right, comforted by prayer, and upheld by her hopes of heaven.

In this spirit the first published version of *Justine* was written (as also the rough sketch). The tale is well told and the incidents lively and diversified; it is one of the most depressing books ever written. For, in spite of experience, we all have a tendency to hope that virtue will be rewarded in the end; the continuous triumph of vice, as the continuous triumph of common sense in *Don Quixote*,

lends a certain monotony to the work. Not that Justine meets exclusively vicious people; at Grenoble she is befriended by at least three disinterested people, including an honourable judge; a certain Monsieur Servan, whom de Sade designates by the initial S, is honoured by being specially pointed out by de Sade as a just and disinterested magistrate in a naughty world. But the good are in a terrible minority; and except in this one case they are never in a position to influence their fellows; the world is composed of rogues and their victims. Both these versions are written in the first person.

The history of Paris between 1791 and 1797 is amply sufficient to account for the alterations between the two versions. During that time de Sade had witnessed the incredible brutalities of the Terror, the fever of blood and lust and crime which had swept the masses in whom he had hoped; he had seen the failure of the Revolution to right any of the major wrongs of a suffering country, the reinstatement of private property and profit, the bloody suppression of Babeuf's egalitarian revolt. The first version of human nature in *Justine* must be re-written; man was not merely a self-seeking hypocrite, he was the most bloodthirsty, cruel and lustful animal that had ever encumbered the face of the earth. *La Nouvelle Justine*, written in the third person, is the final vomiting of de Sade's disgust and disappointment.

In the preface he claims that he has acquired the right to say everything and then goes on to remark that in a century as philosophical as this no one will be scandalized by any descriptions or systems he may employ! (Commentators on de Sade are so fascinated or appalled at his obscenity that they have no eyes for any other quality; yet his irony is sufficiently strong to be appreciated, even if he had not stressed his intention in several foot-notes.) He then goes on: 'As for the cynical descriptions, we believe that since every situation of the soul is at the disposition of the novelist, there are none which he has not the right to employ; only fools will be scandalized; true virtue is never frightened or alarmed by pictures of vice, only finding therein a further motive for the sacred progress it has imposed on itself. Perhaps there will be an outcry against this work; but who will protest? The libertines, as formerly the hypocrites against *Tartuffe*.'

This last sentence needs a little consideration, for in it de Sade reveals part of his conscious motives for writing the book. It was certainly not pornographic – he lacks every qualification for that; he neither beautifies nor romanticises sex, his descriptions are of the most summary, his vocabulary business-like and monotonous, the half-a-dozen necessary and commonplace words (the distinguishing mark of pornography, after its romantic, poetic attitude to sex, is its peculiar vocabulary of synonyms); it was not primarily the demonstration that in present civilization virtue is oppressed and crime prosperous; it was the exposition of human nature at its greatest

development, untrammelled by fear, and particularly in this book of that tangle of wishes called sex. His prophecy about his detractors has proved correct; starting from his personal enemy, Restif de la Bretonne, it has been the gallants, the ladykillers, the successful amorists who have attacked de Sade with the greatest violence and have been the most distressed by his analysis of their behaviour.

If *Justine* may be compared with *Don Quixote*, the story of *Juliette* her sister is an earlier and intensely serious version of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. The last-mentioned delightful work, it will be remembered, is the story of a poor young girl who becomes the mistress of her employer whom she shoots; at her trial she gains the favour of the judge and jury by sexual allure; she then goes to Hollywood where she is taken as mistress by an elderly and unpleasant button-manufacturer; she deceives him when and as occasion arises; she involves a rich young man in a breach of promise suit and compromises with his relatives for money. The man who is keeping her then sends her on a trip to Europe; on the way she indulges in a little espionage; in London she makes love to a man till he gives her an extremely valuable diamond tiara; in Central Europe she makes the acquaintance of an austere but extremely rich young man whom, by the aid of considerable lying and subterfuge, she persuades to propose to her; she makes every effort to prepare for a breach of promise case to obtain heavy damages, but at the last moment, after the robbery of some uncut diamonds, decides to marry him so that she can finance another man with whom she fancies herself in love.

This will probably be claimed to be a wilful distortion of a charming and humorous work; but I do not think the actual plot can be otherwise described; and (with the necessary changes made for time and place) if the actual complaisances which Lorelei was forced to have with her different lovers, the details of the business plans of Mr. Eisman and the political intentions of Major Falcon had been given, you would have a very fair idea of the contents of *Juliette*.

When Juliette, like her sister, was suddenly left an orphan without resources and was equally denied both help and charity from the quarters from which she expected it, she decided to utilize the one asset she possessed and went into a brothel. Her religious convictions had already been undermined by the Mother Superior of the convent where she was educated, and, convinced that no one would help her unless she helped herself, she set about the task of getting money by every possible means. She spent a couple of very unpleasant years at the brothel, robbing her clients as much as she could, when she met an elderly, disagreeable, criminal, and extremely intelligent business man, whose mistress she became. After some time she met at dinner at his house a person called Saint-Fond, a 'statesman,' the most powerful and richest man in the king-

dom, a repulsive megalomaniac; she became less his mistress than the supervisor and administrator of his pleasures, a sort of Pompadour. She retained this position for some time, enjoying very great wealth and numerous privileges, but she was always in a dependent state. She lost Saint-Fond's patronage by betraying her horror at a monstrous project of his to starve to death two-thirds of the population of France. At the age of twenty-two she found herself again nearly as poor as she was seven years earlier, but a good deal more experienced. She went to Angers and started a gambling-den; she there met a respectable provincial nobleman and became his wife. For two years she endured the boredom of matrimony, then poisoned her husband and went to Italy to seek her fortune in company with a card-sharper. She travelled through the different states of which the peninsula was then composed making money by every possible means - stealing and swindling, running brothels and gambling-houses, occasionally prostituting herself. At the age of twenty-five she needed alcohol and opium to stimulate her, she was so exhausted. In her travels through Italy she met the most important people of the time, the King of Sardinia, the King and Queen of Naples, the Pope, and the most prominent members of the aristocracy. She amassed a second large fortune, but that in turn was partly confiscated for a time by her refusal to supply the Doges of Venice with poison. She returned to France to enjoy the money she had sent ahead of her; eventually the Doges restored the rest of her fortune and she settled down to enjoy the ten years of life that remained to her; she died at the age of forty. As might be guessed from the life she was forced to lead she was not very fond of men; her deepest and most passionate friendships were with women. The chief of these were a woman named Clairwil, a cold and vicious person, Princess Borghese, and a strange person with 'psychic' powers called la Durand, an exploiter of the quack magical religions of the time and a vendor of poisons.

The principal motive of this book is not sex, but money, the means of acquiring it, the power it gives, the civilization and institutions which surround it. There is hardly a single phase of the contemporary civilization, from education to the Church, from care of the poor and disabled to politics, which is not scrutinized. The chief characters are business men, aristocrats, kings and the higher clergy; they are condemned out of their own mouths. All through the book there is a tentative search for some form of civilization which would do away with the misfortunes of virtue and the prosperities of vice at the same time; the conclusions reached will be examined later.

This is by far the most realistic of de Sade's books. Research has shown that one after another of the institutions and persons that de Sade denounced were not figures of a diseased imagination but historical truth. Two hundred and fifty pages of Dühren's book are filled with parallels between de Sade's work and the history of the

epoch. From the description of the brothel where Juliette started her apprenticeship to the horrible behaviour of Ferdinand and Caroline, King and Queen of Naples, there is little that is not historically true. Even the man-eating ogre Minski has a historical counterpart in the famous Blaise Ferrage. With regard to the Italian part of the book we have seen that de Sade claimed complete accuracy for all the details, which are based on personal experience. This may be true, for Casanova has shown how easy it was for people of far less distinction than de Sade to approach foreign royalty. His description of Ferdinand and Caroline is scarcely an exaggeration of the facts. Juliette's interview with the Pope is in another category.

Although this book was not published till 1797, I feel certain it was written earlier, at least in part. The optimism alone dates it. Moreover the footnotes bringing the work up to date show conclusively that the first three volumes, up to Juliette's marriage, were written before the death of his personal enemy Mirabeau in 1791. De Sade comments on his erotic works, saying of him, 'Mirabeau, who wanted to be smutty to be something, and who is not and never will be anything all his life.' And he adds in a footnote, 'Assuredly not a legislator; one of the best proofs of the folly and delirium which characterized the year 1789 in France is the ridiculous enthusiasm inspired by this vile spy of the monarchy. What is the impression that remains today of this immoral and unintelligent man? That of a hypocrite, a traitor and a fool.'¹⁷

The rest of the work, with the possible exception of the rather sickening ending, may have been written between 1790 and 1793, when anti-monarchical feeling was at its height, possibly during de Sade's imprisonment for moderantism. It is the only time when de Sade shows a disposition to take kings seriously; at other times he looked behind and beyond them. In the story *Juliette et Raunai* he makes his point of view quite clear when he says, 'Tyranny, which first frightens sovereigns, or rather those that govern them,* ends almost always in providing them with pleasures.'¹⁸ In the present case he was probably trying to use the popular feeling against kings to carry the people with him in his attack on the far more sinister powers which lay behind these figureheads.

As a historical document this book is of considerable value, and it contains many extremely pregnant ideas; as a novel it is poor, losing by its very accuracy, diffuse and episodic; some of the characters, particularly the statesman Saint-Fond, who has nearly a whole volume devoted to him, are well drawn; but regard for truth, and de Sade's comparative ignorance, make many of the others little more than lay figures. There are a large number of well-written descriptions of Italy - its countrysides, its towns, its ruins and its works of art; but I have never personally found much pleasure in the Baedeker school of writing, however minute the observation

* My italics.

and however exquisite the language. Juliette's methods of getting a living necessitate a good deal of obscenity; but there is far less attempt at analysis than in *La Nouvelle Justine*. It would be possible – though difficult – to make a bowdlerized version of *Juliette* which would still be of considerable interest, a feat quite impossible with the two other works.

V – LITERARY INFLUENCE

ALTHOUGH the ban on the greater part of de Sade's work has never been lifted since 1801 (save for a small number of extremely limited and expensive editions) his books by means of clandestine reprints have enjoyed a long and wide circulation. How wide it is impossible to estimate, but there have been learned books quoting him from nearly every country in Europe; and probably the greater number of readers have used him, to employ the admirable phrase of Swinburne, 'either as a stimulant for an old beast or an emetic for a young man, instead of a valuable study to rational curiosity.' During the nineteenth century de Sade's work must have appeared completely satanic; before some corners of the veil of taboo covering sex had been lifted by the psychologists and psychoanalysts, and the findings given a fig-leaf of scientific respectability by a vocabulary free from associations, his knowledge and ideas must have been considered infernal.

De Sade's influence on the literature of Europe since his death has been considerable. Saint Beuve, who was a canny critic, bracketed him with Byron as one of the twin inspirations of 'modern' writers. His influence was obvious and openly confessed in the cases of Flaubert, Baudelaire, Swinburne,* Dostoievski, and Lautréamont. Today his most open disciples (though they completely caricature him) are the French *surréalistes*, with their rather impotent desire for violence, both intellectual and physical.

Despite numerous pointers de Sade has been completely neglected by the historians of literature, with a single exception. At the end of 1930 a learned and polyglot Italian called Mario Praz wrote a 're-proving' work – to use Saki's charming phrase – on the romantic literature of the nineteenth century, chiefly French and English, with side-glances elsewhere at other politically suspect countries and individuals, with the horrific title *La Carne, La Morte ed il Diavolo nella letteratura romantica* (translated into English under the title *The Romantic Agony*). The chief originality of this work lies in the study of the influence of de Sade; in the index de Sade

* Swinburne, particularly, was soaked in de Sade, reading and quoting him constantly; a great deal of *Atalanta* and *Poems and Ballads First Series* are inspired by him. The Fourth Chorus in *Atalanta*, *Anactoria* and *Dolores* especially are practically transcriptions (see Lafourcade, *Jeunesse de Swinburne*, Vol. II).

has easily the greatest number of references, only approached by the 'sadic' poets Swinburne and Baudelaire. With peculiar ingenuousness he starts by denying de Sade any merit soever: 'Dello scrittore – non diciamo poi dello scrittore di genio – mancano al Sade le qualità più elementari. Poligrafo e pornografo a maggior titolo d'un Aretino, tutto il suo merito sta nell' aver lasciato dei documenti che rappresentano la fase mitologica, infantile della psico-patologia.* After which downright statement he proceeds to show his influence on a list of authors which seems, at first glance, to contain most of the major names of French literature of the century, and some quite respectable ones outside; of course all these authors may have been without any sensibility or discrimination. Among those listed are the following: Baudelaire, Shelley (in *The Cenci*), Swinburne, Maturin, J. Janin, Soulié, Pétrus Borel, de Musset, Sue, Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier, Georges Sand, the painter Delacroix, Flaubert, Lautréamont, O. Mirabeau, d'Annunzio, Stendhal, Huysmans, Barbey d'Aureville, Péladan, Barrès, Rachilde, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Rémy de Gourmont and Dostoievski. This list is not exclusive, and possibly one or two of the names are wrongly included as undergoing direct influence; but in any case the catalogue is sufficiently remarkable when it is considered that these authors were all influenced by the works of a man who lacked the most elementary qualities of a writer. I should hesitate to suggest that any of Signor Praz' pontifical judgments are fallible, especially as he may have read *Justine* and *Juliette* (I am not certain of this: there is an extraordinary identity between his quotations and those made by G. Lafourcade in his treatise on Swinburne), and gives quite long if slightly ridiculous quotations from them; a number of these quotations are derived from the manichaean theology of the 'statesman' Saint-Fond, a subject only introduced to add superstition to the other cowardices and vices of this monster, and which is afterwards very thoroughly refuted; obviously such ideas are ridiculous; they were intended to be so.

It is not, however, with de Sade as a writer, but as a thinker and precursor that I am primarily interested; and the rest of the book will be occupied with him in those capacities.

NOTE – For details of the plots of de Sade's works any of the books mentioned in the introduction should be consulted. Guillaume Apollinaire gives the best account of *Les 120 Journées*, Dawes of *Justine et Juliette*. Dühren's account is sketchy, with much emphasis on details which are chastely given in Latin. A German called Otto Flake has also written a book on de Sade, mostly founded on

* It is interesting to note that the correct attitude today to de Sade's work is no longer indignant disgust, but boredom and a refusal to take him seriously.

Dühren; he gives some notion of the plots, but the book so overflows with moral indignation that it is chiefly interesting as a proclamation of Herr Flake's pure mind. In the second volume of his *Vie du Marquis de Sade*, Gilbert Lely gives short summaries of all de Sade's writings.

Philosophy

Chi disputa alegando l'autorità non adopra lo'ngegno, ma-
piuttosto la memoria.

- LEONARDO DA VINCI

Notes

All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following errors:

1. That man has two real existing principles, viz, a Soul and a Body.
2. That Energy, call'd Evil, is alone from the Body; and that Reason, call'd Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

But the following contraries to these are true:

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.
2. Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
3. Energy is eternal delight.

- W. BLAKE

Marriage of Heaven and Hell

I - LA METTRIE

WHEN dealing with a thinker so widely read, so eclectic and at the same time so original as de Sade it is difficult to speak of masters or predecessors. The number of authors he quotes is prodigious, ranging through all classical and modern literature from Rousseau and Hobbes to the Bible, from Herodotus and the Christian Fathers to the travels of Captain Cook, Thomas More and the Encyclopedists. But there is one author whom he quotes more often than any other and who obviously had a preponderating influence on the formation of many of his ideas; that author is La Mettrie, a philosopher now so completely forgotten that I may perhaps be forgiven for giving a short account of his life and principal ideas.

Julien Offroy de La Mettrie was born in 1709, the son of a merchant. He was trained for the Church as a Jansenist, but after a precocious bout of piety - he wrote an *apologia* at the age of fifteen - he became disgusted with theology and started the study of

medicine. He was qualified at Rheims at the age of nineteen and practised for five years; he then went to Leyden and studied under the famous Boerhaave. He translated his master's work on venereal diseases, and added his own work on the same subject, a work which received considerable abuse. In the course of the next few years he published several other medical books. In 1742 he returned to Paris and was made doctor to the army corps of the duc de Grammont, in which capacity he took part in the siege of Fribourg. During these operations he caught a fever and was so struck by the alterations in his personality as the result of delirium that he wrote a book on the subject called *The Natural History of the Soul* which was published at the Hague in 1745, supposedly as a translation from the English. He was at once attacked by the ecclesiastical authorities and forced to resign his commission. In compensation he was made inspector of hospitals; but he employed his leisure in writing a couple of plays which made fun of the doctors and medicine of his time. This did not lessen the animosity felt against him and in 1746 his books were burned by the public executioner and he was forced to flee for his life. He first went to Saz near Ghent, but he was accused of spying and had to escape to Leyden. There he wrote *Man a Machine*, a work which with characteristically impudent wit he dedicated to the extremely pious Haller as an offering to his love of truth. The outcry caused by this work was enormous and his life was in constant danger. By a piece of luck he managed to cross the frontier into Prussia, where he was given asylum by Frederick the Great, 'the Solomon of the North', as he constantly calls him. Frederick created a nominal post for him - Reader to the King - and gave him a pension. They quickly became very friendly, somewhat to Voltaire's annoyance and jealousy. He wrote a number of essays in the next three years, the most important being *The System of Epicurus* and the *Anti-Seneca, or Discourse on Happiness*. The minor works include *L'Homme Plante*, *Les Animaux plus que Machines*, *La Volupté*, and *L'Art de Jouir*, the last two being delicate 'eighteenth-century' lucubrations on love and gallantry. He presented a collected edition of his works to Frederick in 1751 and died in November of that year from eating poisoned food. Frederick pronounced a discourse in praise of him before the Berlin Academy in 1752.¹

We must now examine the ideas that gained for him the attacks not only of the representatives of orthodoxy, but even such comparative free-thinkers as Voltaire, Maupertuis, Diderot, Holbach, Grimm and many others. Even Goethe many years later praised him extremely grudgingly. His principal heresy was the statement that the object of science is the discovery of truth and that this can be obtained exclusively by the use of evidence and experiment. In short he posited the basis on which all modern scientific work rests. He followed this up by the equally shocking statement that man must be considered as an animal - that if, as Descartes said, animals were machines, then so was man; if man was more than a

machine, then so were the animals. In short he posited the basis on which all modern medicine and biology rests. Finally he claimed that the idea of a 'soul' deprived of senses is inconceivable, and that the soul developed and decayed with the body and was subject to the same modifications as the body - e.g., various intoxications, delirium, neurosis and madness. The dualism of Descartes, Malebranche, or Leibnitz was untenable, because unverifiable. In short he posited the basis on which nearly all modern psychology rests. For all science today is materialist in its assumptions, whatever it may be in its popularizations; it is a pity that it has forgotten this precursor and well-nigh martyr in the cause of objectivity.

It is difficult to realize today the strangle-hold maintained by religion on every department of thought up to the middle of the last century. In most countries today religion is so much on the defensive, so 'broadminded' and complaisant and unassuming, that we can hardly throw our minds back to the time when Darwin was preached against in every pulpit and Hegel denounced as heretical. Similar conduct in the Bible Belt of the United States or Ireland or Spain is smiled at and deplored even by the most pious of churchmen. In the middle of the eighteenth century affairs were very different; not only the central ideas but even the minor dogmas of the Catholic Church must not be questioned. For La Mettrie never called himself an atheist, but an agnostic; he considered the existence of God and some sort of survival after death as probable but unverifiable and therefore to be excluded from philosophy; he adds that we have no means of knowing which cult pleases God the most; and all cults are objectionable on account of the wars they engender.

In the preface to his collected works he makes a rather disingenuous apology for himself. He admits that philosophy is contrary to both morality and religion, but denies that it can destroy or harm them. Philosophy, which is entirely concerned with evidence, stands in the same relation to nature as morality does to religion. But it can never affect the masses, for its appeal is based on reason, to which the masses are blind, whereas religion is based on emotion, and therefore potent. Although it never touches politics it is useful to rulers as it enables them to see through rhetoric and similar emotional appeals. Legislators will control men better as philosophers than as orators, as reasonable rather than reasoning beings. Philosophy for him is materialist, pragmatical, atheist. ('Atheists are virtuous by conviction, theists if at all by superstition.') It can only be based on physical science, derived from sensual observation, and must be completely unbiased by preconceived ideas of any sort.

He then makes a personal justification, claiming that there need be no correspondence between an author and his work, for he writes for truth and speaks and acts for convenience. Finally he closes with an exordium that must have touched de Sade very closely. He demands a 'republican' freedom of thought and writing,

and exalts spiritual over physical liberty. And he advises the future philosopher to write anonymously and 'as though you were alone in the universe, or as though you had nothing to fear from man's jealousy and prejudice'.

The *Treatise on the Soul* is an exposition of his mechanistic view of man. A great deal of his theory is invalidated for us by the central position he gives to the theory of the animal spirits or electric fluid in the nerves, by means of which all perceptions are conveyed to the brain. This idea, which originated in Malebranche, was universally held till the beginning of the nineteenth century; de Sade takes it over unquestioned; it gave a satisfactory, but oversimplified, account of sensations. He denies the metaphysical conception of the soul, claiming that it only exists through sensations; he defines it as the motive principle of passive matter. Later he makes the assumption, which de Sade places in a central position in his metaphysics, that motion, at any rate, potential motion, is a property of matter. He then examines the various faculties from this point of view. *Judgment* is the comparison of ideas founded on memory and association. Too good a memory is bad for judgment. *Imagination* is the voluntary reproduction of sense impressions. In health it is weaker than external impressions, but in delirium or under drugs it can be stronger, and in any case need not be true. *Hysteria* is voluntary - there is no wish to be cured. *Love* is a sort of madness. *Passions* are based on the pleasure-pain principle. *Instincts* are mechanical reactions, equally valid for humans and animals, as can be seen by the latter's pantomime. *Sensations of the soul* are due to knowledge and pleasure and pain caused by modifications of the self. *Happiness* is an involuntary manner of thinking and feeling; men are happy by accident, but philosophy teaches resignation. *Will* is the result of pleasure-pain stimuli. *Good taste* is majority taste. *Genius* is general excellence. It is easy to be a good mathematician because the subject is so limited. *Free Will* is probably a true conception. *Faith* is necessary to explain the origin of evil, the nature of the soul, and life after death.

Man a Machine is a development of the same thesis; it is primarily a refutation of Descartes. The human body is defined as a self-winding machine, with courage as a coefficient of food, but a machine so complicated that it is impossible to get a clear idea of it or a definition. Character and morals differ with temperament, heredity and environment. Mind and body are interdependent, the one modifying the other (fever and anxiety both prevent sleep). Anatomically there is a great similarity between men and animals, the chief difference being that man speaks and that he possesses the heaviest and most complicated brain. Man at birth is the weakest and stupidest of all animals, for his instincts are feeble; the more sense an animal has, the less instinct. Imagination - image-forming - is the chief function of the soul, all other faculties deriving from it. Philosophy is imagination plus self-criticism.

In the course of this essay he lets drop a number of generalizations, unconnected with the subject, which have either directly or through the criticism they provoked from him a great significance in the study of de Sade. Nature, he says, not God, is the prime mover; but Nature is purposeless and inequality is one of her characteristics. The natural law is, 'Don't do to others what you wouldn't have done to you'. In people appearance and character correspond (an idea de Sade held very firmly). Motion is a property of matter, *vide* the muscular reactions of dead animals. Anything which doesn't touch the senses is an impenetrable mystery. In the eyes of nature all creatures are equal; there is only one substance, differently modified in the universe. Finally three axioms: 'Never generalize in science'; 'Only good doctors should be judges'; 'We were not born to be wise but to be happy, from the worm to the eagle'.

The System of Epicurus is a number of apothegms defining his attitude to life. It is hedonistic and pragmatism. It is not only impossible to know first causes but useless to worry about them. Nature is the prime mover and is amoral, indifferent and purposeless. Man was the last in creation because he is the most complicated. Life can be very pleasant if you don't take it too seriously; materialism is the antidote to misanthropy. Man is not responsible for his qualities or defects, and therefore remorse is useless, nor is he criminal for following his instincts. Death is annihilation, and therefore unimportant; what do we risk in dying? and what don't we risk in living? Knowledge is only good if it is useful. 'Just as medicine is often only a science of remedies with fine names, philosophy is only a science of fine words: it's doubly lucky when the first cure and the second mean something.'

The *Anti-Seneca* is a plea for sensibility against stoicism. Happiness depends on character and is unintellectual. 'One can be happy in refraining from what causes remorse: but thereby one often refrains from pleasure, from the demands of Nature.' Illusion is preferable to an unpleasant reality. Knowledge is only good, in so far as it is conducive to happiness, and to worry about the future is folly. Men are born bad but are improved by education; nevertheless the disposition to evil is such that it is easier for the good to become bad than for the bad to become good. Virtues and vices only exist relatively to society, and the appearance of virtue is as good as virtue itself. Happiness comes from consciousness, not from fame, and remorse is a childish and useless feeling. Crime is also a search for happiness - it is a question of character. Happiness is irrespective of virtue and a man who has a greater satisfaction in evil-doing will be happier than he who has less in good works. There are criminal natures who enjoy torturing. The instincts are stronger than education. Happiness does not depend entirely on sensuality, though the pleasures of the intellect are only partial. Men can be unhappy socially and happy personally. Public opinion

is unimportant and fame deceitful. Adversity is the midwife of the virtues; suicide is justifiable but stupid.

In *La Volupté* and *L'Art de Jouir* he gives his prescription for happiness. It is very delicate, very sentimental, and very erotic, illustrated with excerpts from imaginary classical idylls. He dislikes obscenity and obscene books (which he considers dangerous as destroying illusions) and prefers what I can only qualify as elegant poetic pornography. For him, pleasure is nonexistent without sentiment. Within the limits he sets himself he shows considerable interest and knowledge in sexual technique and variations, even going beyond what is generally considered permitted with the explanation that 'Tout est femme dans ce qu'on aime'. Despite, and partly on account of, his boastings, one gets the impression that he was not particularly potent.

II - GENERAL PRINCIPLES

I HAVE found it desirable to give this rather detailed précis of La Mettrie's ideas in the somewhat boring style one associates with the works of Aristotle, as this makes a convenient point from which to consider de Sade's general philosophy. He accepted from La Mettrie completely the materialist conception of man and the universe, much elaborating the thesis, but not questioning it, and with it La Mettrie's view of nature. He also accepted from him the idea that the pursuit of happiness is the main object of all activity after self-preservation, and the fatalistic acquiescence in the irresponsible divagations of character. He seized on and elaborated at enormous length the purely temporal and local aspect of actions regarded as virtuous and vicious; he makes huge catalogues of examples drawn from the literature and folklore of every country to show that actions regarded as virtuous in eighteenth-century France were considered vicious at other times and places, and conversely; so much so that an early critic considered this to be his main object in writing. Finally he accepted the paramouncy of imagination in intellectual, and sensation in physical activity, the uselessness of remorse, the value of truth for its own sake and the supreme importance of education.

His chief difference with La Mettrie was one of character. La Mettrie was a happy and contented man, an epicurean, with epicurean pococurantism. He was interested in truth as an abstract idea, not as it affected his fellows; like many scientists and philosophers he had no desire to apply his results to life. Even his devotion to truth was not fanatical; he quotes with great approval Montaigne's remark, 'La vérité doit se soutenir jusqu'au feu, mais exclusivement'. He was quite happy to be illogical and he never attempted to develop his ideas to their logical conclusion.

De Sade on the other hand was a fanatic - his moderantism during the Terror is sufficient proof - and mercilessly logical.

'Philosophy is not the art of consoling fools: its only aim is to teach truth and destroy prejudices.' Also he was only interested in truth as it affected mankind here and now; and all his original work was concerned with man in his relations to God, to the State and to his neighbours – in other words, religion, politics and what for convenience can be called sex; but before examining his diagnoses and suggestions in these three departments of human life it will be convenient to deal in more detail with a few of his more general ideas.

Perhaps the most important of his philosophical conceptions is his distinction between 'real' and 'objective' ideas and his treatment of the idea of cause-and-effect; the passage in question⁸ is rather long and elaborated; I have abbreviated it as much as possible. The Mother Superior is instructing Juliette.

'What is reason? It is the faculty given to me by nature to determine me in favour of one line of conduct as opposed to another, according to the pleasure or pain involved; a calculation obviously determined by the senses. Reason, as Féret says, is the balance with which we weigh objects and by which . . . we know what we ought to think by their mutual relation. . . . The first effect of reason is to assign an essential difference between the object that appears and the object that is perceived. Representative perceptions of an object are again different. If it shows us objects as being absent, but formerly present, that is called memory. If it shows us objects without warning us of their absence that is called imagination, and that is the true source of all our errors . . . in that we suppose a real existence in the objects of these interior perceptions and believe that they exist apart from us, since we conceive them apart from us. To make this distinction clear I will give to this branch of ideas the name of "objective idea" to distinguish it from a true perception which I will call a "real idea" . . . The infinitesimal point, so essential to geometry, is an "objective idea"; bodies and solids are "real". . . . Before proceeding further it must be remarked that the confusion of these two groups of ideas is extremely common . . . People were forced to imagine general terms for groups of similar ideas; and they called "cause" any thing which produces some change in a body independent of it, and "effect" any change produced by a cause. As these terms call up for us a more or less confused image of existence, action, reaction, change, the habit of using them has made us think that they correspond to a clear and distinct perception. . . . People are unwilling to reflect that since all things act and react on one another incessantly they produce and undergo change at the same time. . . . This idea has considerable importance in his analysis of sex and other instincts.

It follows from this that words should be examined with the greatest caution. 'Like all the fools with the same principles you will reply to me that all these [problems of the soul, etc.] are mysteries; but if they are mysteries you understand nothing about them, in which case how can you decide affirmatively about a thing of which

you are incapable of forming any idea? To believe in or affirm a thing one must at least know what one is believing in and affirming. To believe in the immateriality of the soul is equivalent to saying that one is convinced of a thing of which it is impossible to form any "real" notion; it is believing in words without attaching any meaning to them; to affirm that a thing is what one says it is is the height of folly and vanity.⁷⁴

On materialism. 'People offer us as an objection that materialism makes man simply a machine, which they find very derogatory to humanity; will that humanity be much more honoured when you say that man acts under the secret impulsions of a spirit or something which animates him somehow?'⁷⁵ And again: 'The esteem which so many people have for spirituality seems to have its only motive in the impossibility in which they find themselves of defining it in an intelligible manner when they say to us that the soul is finer than the body they tell us nothing except that that of which we have absolutely no knowledge must be far more lovely than that of which we have some faint idea.'⁷⁶

De Sade categorically denies the existence of free will. He places the following speech in the mouth of the Cardinal Bernis, at the time the Ambassador of France, formerly reputed to be one of the Pompadour's lovers; his reputation for chastity was not above suspicion (see Casanova) nor were his verses particularly moral; and although de Sade allows him considerable wit and intelligence, as was his due, his reputation and his rank are sufficient to embroil him in some of Juliette's most disreputable adventures. I give the speech in full, as it is a good example of de Sade's methods.

'The faculty of comparing different methods of action and deciding on the one which appears to us to be the best is what is meant by free will. Does man possess that faculty? I make bold to affirm that he doesn't possess it, and that it would be impossible for him to do so. All our ideas owe their origin to physical and material causes which lead us in spite of ourselves because these causes belong to our organization and the exterior objects which influence us; our motives are the results of these causes, and consequently our will is not free. Assailed by different motives we hesitate, but the instant when we make up our mind doesn't depend on us; it is necessitated by the different dispositions of our organs; we are always led by them, and it never depends on us to take one mode of action rather than another; always moved by necessity, always the slaves of necessity, the very instant when we think we have the most completely demonstrated our free will is the one in which we are led most invincibly. Hesitation and indecision make us believe in the freedom of our will, but that pretended freedom is only the instant when the weights in the balance are equal. As soon as a decision is taken it is because one side is heavier than the other, and it is not we who are the cause of the inequality but physical objects which act on us and make us the plaything of all human conventions, the

plaything of the motor force of nature, like the animals and plants. Everything depends on the action of the nervous fluid and the difference between a criminal and an honest man consists in the greater or less activity of the animal spirits which compose this fluid.

"I feel," said Fénelon, "that I am free, that I am completely in the hands of my own decisions." This gratuitous assertion is impossible to prove. What makes the Archbishop of Cambrai so sure that, when he made up his mind to embrace the pleasant doctrine of Madame Guyon, he was free to choose the opposite path? The most that he can prove to me is that he has hesitated, but I defy him to prove to me that he was free to take the other path, from the moment that he decided as he did. "I modify myself with God," this author continues, "I am the real cause of my own will." But Fénelon has not considered in saying this that since God is the stronger he has made Him the real cause of all his crimes; also he has not considered that nothing destroys God's omnipotence as man's free will, for that omnipotence of God which you suppose, and which I grant to you for a moment, is only such because God has ordained all things from the beginning, and it is in consequence of this invariable ordination that man can be no more than a passive being who can change nothing in the order of things and who consequently has not free will. If he had free will he could at any moment destroy this first established order, in which case he would become as powerful as God. A supporter of the divinity like Fénelon should have considered this subject more carefully.

Newton skated warily over this great difficulty, daring neither to go into it deeply nor to embroil himself in it; Fénelon, more positive though less learned, adds, "When I will a thing it is in my power not to will it; when I do not will a thing it is in my power to will it." No. Since you didn't do it when you wanted, it is because it wasn't in your power to do so, and because all the physical causes which must direct the balance pressed it down, this time, on the side of the action that you did take, and choice was no longer in your power from the moment that you had been determined. Therefore your will was not free; you have balanced, but your will was not free and never is. When you let yourself go in the direction that you have chosen, it is because it was impossible to you to choose the other. You have been blinded by your indecision, you have believed yourself capable of choice because you have felt yourself capable of balancing. But that indecision, the physical effect of two external objects presented simultaneously, and the freedom to choose between them are two very different things."

God and Nature

Remove away that black'ning church,
Remove away that marriage hearse,
Remove away that man of blood—
You'll quite remove the ancient curse.

— W. BLAKE

Gnomic Verses

From these contraries spring what the religious call Good and
Evil. Good is the passive that obeys reason. Evil is the active,
springing from energy.

— W. BLAKE

Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Are gone to praise God and His Priest and King
Who make up a heaven of our misery.

— W. BLAKE

Songs of Experience

I

ALL his life de Sade was obsessed by God. People who wish to denigrate him by calling him mad would have far more justification in calling him a religious, rather than a sexual, maniac. There is not a single one of his writings but is occupied with religion; quite a number deal with sex not at all, or at most summarily.

We have seen that in his youth in 1763 he attached great importance to the sacrament and speaks of religion with considerable piety. There is little reason to question his sincerity; his family, during its seven hundred years of recorded existence, has had a continual connection with the Church; faith in God and His service was a family tradition.

In 1782 he had changed his position. It is from that year, the third of his continual imprisonment, that date the first writings of his that have been published; and the very first that is developed is an elegant little *Dialogue between a Priest and a Dying Man*. This short essay in the style of Fontenelle is concerned with the inadequacy of the religious description of the universe; the addition of the mysteries of God to the mysteries of Nature only makes the understanding of the latter more difficult; with the unsatisfactory nature of prophecies, martyrs, miracles ("To believe in a miracle I should want to be absolutely sure that the phenomenon you claim

as such is absolutely contrary to the laws of Nature – for only so can it be a miracle: and who knows enough of Nature to be able to swear that this is the precise point at which she draws a line and where she is outraged?¹⁾ The whole opusculum is a well-reasoned piece of dialectic; it is moderate and dignified in its language.

From this time onwards de Sade cannot leave God and religion – particularly the Catholic Church – alone. By comparison he showed a certain amount of respect and toleration for Protestantism. I do not think there are fifty pages in any of his works in which the subject is not mentioned. His knowledge of the literature concerned with it is encyclopedic. He would seem to know the Bible almost by heart; he quotes and deals with Christian apologists from the early Fathers to Scot, Fénelon, Pascal, and even more recent theologians; he mentions the Koran and Confucius; he deals in theological quibbles of the greatest niceness and subtlety; he is aware of the distinctions of the heresies which have at different times rent the Church; he discusses at length every one of its central dogmas.

All this learning is employed in an attack on God and the Church which for length and intensity can seldom have been equalled; he attacks them with reason, with ridicule, with imprecations, with blasphemy; he attacks from the philosophical, the economic, the political, the ideal and the pragmatic angle; he ranges from the discussion of inconsistencies in the Bible (in the style of the question, 'How could Pharaoh's cavalry pursue the Jews in a country where cavalry cannot operate, and further how did Pharaoh come to have any cavalry since, in the fifth of the plagues of Egypt, God had caused all the horses to perish?'²⁾ to the Black Mass, from the history of the Papacy to the pre-Christian origin of the Eucharist, from the dogma of Hell to the economic foundations of the Church's property.

The basis of all this is obvious. De Sade was a passionate idealist and could neither forgive a God who permitted all the evil and misery of which he was so terribly aware, nor a Church whose explanations could not satisfy his reason, and whose practice and representatives so completely belied the principles they professed to observe. The culminating point of his attack is Juliette's interview with Pope Pius VI; it opens as follows: "Haughty phantom," I replied to this old despot, "your habit of deceiving other men makes you try to deceive yourself. . . . Listen to me, you Bishop of Rome, and allow me to analyse for a moment your power and your pretensions.

"A religion is formed in Galilee whose bases are poverty, equality and hatred of the rich. The principles of this holy doctrine are that it is as impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle; that the rich man is damned, uniquely because he is rich. The disciples of this cult are expressly forbidden to make any provision. Their head Jesus

says positively, 'I have not come to be served but to serve . . . There shall be neither first nor last amongst you . . . He among you who would raise himself shall be debased, and he who will be first shall be last' (a). The first apostles of this religion earn their bread in the sweat of their brow. That is all true?" "Certainly." "Well, then, I ask you what relation there is between these primitive institutions and the enormous riches that you have given to you in Italy. Does your wealth come from the Gospel or from the roguery of your predecessors? . . . Poor man, and you think you can still impose upon us!" "Atheist, at least respect the descendant of Saint Peter." "You're not descended from him. . . . (b)"⁸ Juliette then proceeds to analyse the origin of the papacy and to account for its growth by its political usefulness to the different rulers during the troubled centuries of the middle Empire; she blames the Church's obscurantism in the Middle Ages, and then gives a brief but comprehensive history of the crimes and inconsistencies of the Papacy.

To the passage quoted de Sade adds two curious footnotes. The first (a) follows the quotation from the Gospel; he writes, 'It is amusing that the Jacobins in the French Revolution wished to destroy the altars of a God who used absolutely their language, and even more extraordinary that those who detest and wish to destroy the Jacobins do so in the name of God who speaks like the Jacobins. If this is not the ne plus ultra of human absurdity I should like to know what is.' The second (b) is an elaborate discussion of the real meaning of the name Peter and the Holy Pun made on that word in which he decides that the Christian Peter is the same as Arnac, Hermes and Janus of the ancients, all of whom had the gift of opening the gates of some paradise; and he employs Phoenician, Hebrew and Latin etymology to prove that Peter, or Kephas, can mean Opener as well as Rock.

Again and again he reverts to the inconsistency between Christian profession and practice; the most savage politician in his works is the Bishop of Grenoble. Continually, too, he stresses the political reasons which allowed the Church to emerge and which account for its continual support. The statesman Saint-Fond is made to say, 'The force of the sceptre depends on that of the thurible; these two authorities have the greatest interest in mutual help and it is only by dividing them that the masses will shake off the yoke. Nothing makes people so abject as religious fears; it is right that they should fear eternal punishment if they revolt against their king; that is why the European powers are always on good terms with Rome.'⁴ When Juliette is talking to Ferdinand of Naples, she says (Lenin's famous epigram strangely echoes her), 'You keep the people in ignorance and superstition . . . because you fear them if they are enlightened; you drug them with opium . . . so that they shall not realize the way you oppress them.'⁶

He attacks the Church as an economic racket. 'Unquestionably priests had their motives in inventing the ridiculous fable of the

soul's immortality; could they otherwise have made moribunds contribute?'⁶ This theme is developed with several variations.

Religion is dangerous as a basis on which to build morality; for if the falseness of the foundations is recognized, the whole edifice will tumble down.⁷ Similarly the fact that it may be a consolation to some is not sufficient reason for it. 'I cannot see that the desire to appease a few fools,' says the Mother Superior to Juliette, 'is worth the poisoning of millions of honest folk; and anyhow is it reasonable to make one's desires a measure of the truth?'⁸

Saint-Fond, the wicked statesman, is superstitious and credulous; it is the last insult that de Sade can give to his villains. He believes in a sort of Manichaeian diabolism, in which hell plays a central part; and he thinks that by some ritual he can make his victims sell their souls to the devil. The confession of this weakness is an excuse for a fifty-page examination of the dogma of hell considered from every possible angle.⁹ First of all the Old and New Testaments are examined with great detail to prove that the idea of eternal damnation does not exist in them, that the idea of Gehenna was purely local and temporal; secondly it is argued that the fear of hellfire is an ineffective method of restraining men from evil-doing, for the damned, who cannot repent, are invisible and therefore no use as a warning to the living, and crime is if anything more common in the countries where such beliefs are held; thirdly the muddled thinking is ridiculed which can associate fire and torment with disembodied spirits; and finally de Sade expatiates on the barbarity of a God who can punish finite faults with infinite pains. This is the centre of his complaint; for him, as for Blake the great 'sadistic' poet, the Christian God is too base and too immoral to be accepted. 'So,' he writes, 'after having made man extremely unhappy in this world, religion gives him the vision of a God . . . who will make him even more so in the next. I know they get out of this dilemma by saying that God's goodness will give place to justice; but a goodness which gives place to terrible cruelty is not infinite. . . . Would it not have been more in keeping with his goodness, with reason and with equity only to have created plants and stones, rather than to form men whose conduct can bring on them infinite pain? A God treacherous and evil enough to create a single man and then to expose him to the danger of self-damnation cannot be considered as perfect; he can only be considered as a monster . . .'. And finally, 'If you want a God, let Him be faultless and worthy of respect.'

This cry is continually reappearing; man has made God in his own image,¹⁰ God is either impotent or cruel;¹¹ give us a God worthy of respect!

His hatred for the God that had deceived him is rabid. No opportunity for reviling, for ridicule, for imprecations, for blasphemy is neglected; the mockery and insults are so intense that they tend to miss their effect. With considerable inconsistency (at least on the

surface) a number of black masses are described. (It is an interesting comment on human frailty that the engraving illustrating one of these is nearly always torn out from the first edition; the possessors didn't mind reading the descriptions or admiring the obscenities of the other ninety-nine plates; but a line had to be drawn somewhere!) De Sade indeed feels called upon to make excuses; the importance others would attach to such acts is their justification.

II

IN place of the God he could not respect, de Sade enthroned Nature as the prime mover of the universe; but this Nature is not a consistent conception; in the fifteen years covered by his most important writings the idea undergoes constant modifications. In the *Dialogue* she is considered as pleasant, beneficent, and philanthropic, somewhat in the style of Rousseau; within three years she becomes 'That unknown brute' - 'bête,' I think, carries the idea of stupidity without any moral inflection; another three years and it is 'the disorders of that stepmother, Nature'; until finally in *La Nouvelle Justine* she becomes a sort of malevolent goddess, entirely occupied in harming mankind, and who is best seen in the Sahara desert or the crater of Etna.¹²

This degradation of Nature is accompanied by a degradation of man and of 'The law of Nature'; this latter changes from 'Make others as happy as you wish to be yourself' to 'Please yourself, no matter at whose expense.'¹³ Nature's sole object in creation is to have the pleasure of destruction; while man is destroying, is giving free rein to all the criminal instincts Nature has planted in him, he is being natural, following in Nature's plans; virtue, and education which leads to virtue, are unnatural. It follows that ethically man's mission is an endless battle against this adversary, this ogress Nature; but pleasure and pain are her weapons, and the former can only be achieved by following her will.

From this personification of Nature there emerges a version of Bernard Shaw's peculiar worship of the 'Life Force' - a Force which possesses all the ascetic, benevolent and partly informed qualities of its inventor; de Sade's version is not so personal. 'Once man has been launched on to the earth he received direct laws from which he cannot depart; these laws are those of self-preservation and propagation . . . laws which affect him and depend on him, but which are in no way necessary to Nature; for he is no longer a part of Nature; he is separated from her. He is entirely distinct, so much so that he is no longer useful to her progress . . . or necessary to her combinations, so that he could quadruple his species or completely annihilate it, without in the least altering the universe. If he multiplies he does right in his own eyes, if he decreases he does wrong, equally in his own eyes. But in the eyes of Nature it is quite different.

If he multiplies he does wrong, for he deprives Nature of the honour of a new phenomenon, the results of her laws being necessarily creatures. If those that have been launched didn't multiply, she would launch new beings, and would enjoy a faculty she has no longer. Not that she could not have it if she wished to, but she never does anything uselessly, and as long as the first beings launched propagate themselves by the faculties they have in them, she will not propagate any more. . . . You will object perhaps that if this faculty of self-propagation, which her creatures have, harmed her, she would not have given it to them . . . but she is not free, she is the first slave of her laws . . . she is enchained by her laws which she cannot alter in any jot or tittle, and one of these laws is the vital urge of her creatures once made and their faculty for self-propagation. But were these creatures to stop propagating or be destroyed then Nature would regain her primal rights. . . . Does she not prove to us how much our multiplication irritates her . . . by the plagues with which she ceaselessly visits us, the division she sows amongst us . . . by the wars and famines, plagues and monsters, criminals like Alexander, Tamberlaine, Gengis Khan, all the *heroes* who devastate the earth. . . .¹⁴ The Pope, who makes this speech, goes on to prove the equality of all things in the eyes of Nature, and therefore the unimportance of murder, whether through passion, ritual, custom or war, with examples drawn from every country.

'This view of Nature, with its implications, is the best known, in fact practically the only known, part of de Sade's Weltanschauung; for *La Nouvelle Justine*, by far the most notorious of his books, is almost exclusively occupied with the development and application of this theory; in this book almost all the characters are anti-social 'natural' men, as in *Juliette* they are anti-social rich men. The epigraph to the book stresses the point:

On n'est point criminel pour faire la peinture
Des bizarres penchans qu'inspire la Nature.

Nature proceeds by destruction and corruption: 'When the seed germinates in the earth, when it fertilizes and reproduces itself is it otherwise than by corruption, and is not corruption the first of the laws of generation?'¹⁵ and consequently human destruction and corruption follow Nature's laws. Do not our instincts urge us to such actions, and are not our instincts the voice of Nature?¹⁶ It follows that we are in no way responsible for our tastes and inclinations: 'Is man the master of his tastes? One should be sorry for those who have strange ones, but never insult them; their wrong is Nature's; they were no more capable of coming into the world with different tastes than we are of being born plain or beautiful';¹⁷ and he who abandons himself most recklessly to the promptings of Nature will be happiest, although nowadays 'we are more creatures of habit than of Nature.'¹⁸

This conception has far more extensive results than the removal

of responsibility from man for his criminal behaviour; it is an implicit and explicit criticism of the backward-looking optimism of Rousseau and all his school, including Condorcet and Babeuf. It completely dethrones the 'noble savage' – with what glee does not de Sade comb the accounts of foreign travel for instances of savage barbarity, lust and superstition! – and the notion that man can revert to justice and happiness.

For de Sade, savage man knows only two necessities – hunger and lust;¹⁹ there is only one distinction – force,²⁰ the result of Nature's inequality. 'What mortal is fool enough to assert, against all the evidence, that men are born with equal rights or strength? Only a misanthropist like Rousseau would dare to establish such a paradox, because, being very weak himself, he prefers to degrade to his own level those to whom he did not dare raise himself. But how can a pigmy be the equal of . . . Hercules? . . . In the beginning of societies . . . a family or village being forced to defend itself chose amongst its members the person who seemed to unite the qualities (strength, cleverness, etc) mentioned above. Once the chief had been given this authority he took slaves from amongst the weakest. . . . When societies became established, the descendants of these first chiefs, accustomed to represent their fathers, although often far from equalling them in physical or moral qualities, continued to exercise authority. . . . This was the origin of aristocracy. . . . They inherited a power handed over to their predecessors by necessity; they abused it by caprice. . . .'²¹

This view of the origin of society has the advantage over Rousseau's of placing the golden age of mankind in the future, rather than in the past. The next two chapters will be occupied with de Sade's diagnosis of contemporary civilization and the various remedies he proposed.

Politics I – Diagnosis

Prisons are built with the stones of law,
Brothels with bricks of Religion.

– W. BLAKE

Marriage of Heaven and Hell

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant's cry of Fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear.

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning church appals;
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

– W. BLAKE

Songs of Experience

I – CLASS DIVISIONS

IN Europe society is divided into two antagonistic classes – the haves and the have-nots. This point is so fundamental for de Sade that he stresses it in every book. In *Aline et Valcour* the good king Zamé begins his description of his visit to Europe by saying: 'Everywhere I could reduce men into two classes both equally pitiable; in the one the rich who was the slave of his pleasures; in the other the unhappy victims of fortune; and I never found in the former the desire to be better or in the latter the possibility of becoming so, as though both classes were working for their common misery. . . . I saw the rich continually increasing the chains of the poor, while doubling his own luxury, while the poor, insulted and despised by the other, did not even receive the encouragement necessary to bear his burden. I demanded equality and was told it was Utopian; but I soon saw that those who denied its possibility were those who would lose by it. . . .'¹

He defines his conception of these classes very exactly. 'Don't think that I mean by the *people* the caste called the *tiers-état* [bourgeoisie in the limited sense]; no, I mean by the *people* . . . those who can only get a living by their labour and sweat.' This is the beginning of a treatise on the class-war by the extremely savage Bishop of

Grenoble; and de Sade, trying to guard against the misunderstanding of which he has been a perpetual victim, adds a footnote saying, 'Considering in whose mouth we place these projects of despotism and terror, our readers will not be able to accuse us of trying to make them liked.' He deceived himself on his readers' acuity.

The Bishop continued: 'That is the class that I would abandon to perpetual chains and humiliation. . . .; all others ought to join together against this abject class . . . to fasten chains upon them, since they in their turn will be enchained if they relax.' He then outlines a series of oppressive measures to be enforced against the workers and peasants, which include public torture and execution, and adds, 'By these projects how well will the hatred be satisfied of those numerous gentlemen for this wretched class of which Saint-Pouanges, Archbishop of Toulouse, could not see a representative without belabouring him with abuse and blows, or having him set upon by his servants!'²

II - NATURE OF PROPERTY

THIS distinction of classes is founded on property; and with unaccustomed epigrammatic terseness de Sade defined property as 'a crime committed by the rich against the poor'.³ But he examined this institution more closely. 'Going back to the origin of the right of property,' he writes, 'we come necessarily to usurpation. But theft is only punished because it attacks the right of property; but the right is in origin itself a theft, so that the law punishes theft because it attacks theft. . . . As long as there is no property legitimately established (which is impossible) it will be very difficult to prove theft a crime.'⁴

He accepts Rousseau's premise of the Social Contract but his elaboration of the idea is individual. 'When laws were made and the weak consented to lose some of his liberty to preserve the rest, the continued and peaceful enjoyment of his possessions was undoubtedly the first thing he desired, and the first object of the restraints he asked for. The stronger consented to laws he knew he could wriggle out of, and they were made. It was pronounced that every man should possess his heritage in peace, and anyone troubling it should be punished. But that was not the work of Nature but of man, henceforth divided into two classes; the first who gave up a quarter of its rights to possess the rest in peace; the second who, profiting by this quarter and seeing that it could have the other three portions when it wanted consented to prevent, not his class despoiling the weak, but the weak despoiling one another, so that it alone could despoil them at its ease. So theft . . . was not banished from the earth but changed its form; people robbed legally. Magistrates robbed in having themselves paid for a justice they should give gratuitously. The priest robbed in having himself paid for acting as a

mediator between man and his God. The merchant robbed by profiteering, by having his goods paid at a third more than their real intrinsic value. Sovereigns robbed by imposing on their subjects arbitrary taxes and imposts, etc. All these thievings were permitted and authorized under the specious name of "rights", and action was only taken against the most natural, that is to say against the man who lacked money and tried to get it from those whom he suspected to be richer than he, without considering that the first thieves, to whom not a word was said, were the unique cause of the crimes of the second. . . . When the miserable peasant, reduced to charity by the enormous taxes you impose upon him, leaves his plough, takes arms and goes to await you on the highroad you commit an infamous action if you punish him; it is not he who is in fault. . . .²⁵

III - THE RULING CLASSES —THEIR POLICIES AND MECHANISMS

THESE remarks on property come at the beginning of *Juliette*, and are obviously intended to act as guide to the motives of the politicians, kings, and financiers who people the six volumes of this work. The first three volumes deal with France, the fourth and sixth with Italy; and most of the fifth consists of a brief review of the sovereigns of Northern Europe, with the exception of England. Without giving a précis of the whole work it is difficult to illustrate de Sade's very thorough examination of the ruling classes; he exposes a system of corruption and intrigue together with a hard-heartedness and sanctimonious cynicism which might have served as a model to Hitler's Germany. The astounding feature of the book is its modernity; it is difficult to realize that it is the eighteenth and not the twentieth century he is describing. The following speech of Saint-Fond, for example, might easily be part of a confidential memorandum by one of the franker members of the Nazi inner group. 'We are frightened,' he says, 'of a revolution in the kingdom shortly; we see its germ in a too numerous population. The greater the extension of the masses, the greater the danger; the more enlightened they are the more they are to be feared. First of all we are going to suppress all the free schools whose lessons, propagating too rapidly, give us painters, poets, and philosophers where we only want labourers. What need have people like that of talents, and what use is there in giving them to them? Let us rather diminish their number; France has need of a vigorous bleeding, and it is the shameful parts we must attack. To attain this aim we are first of all going to attack the unemployed with the greatest rigour; it is almost always from that class that agitators appear; we are going to destroy the hospitals and refuges; we don't want to leave the masses a single asylum which can encourage their insolence. Bound under chains a thousand times heavier than those they bear in Asia, we want them

to crawl like slaves, and we will spare no means to accomplish this aim. "These proceedings will be long," said Clairwil, "and if you want to act quickly you want speedier ones: war, famine, plague." "The first is certain," replied Saint-Fond, "We are shortly going to have a war. We don't want the third for we might be among the victims. As for famine, the corner in grain at which we're working will firstly cover us with riches and will soon reduce the masses to eating one another. The Cabinet has decided on it because it is prompt, infallible, and will cover us with gold."

Saint-Fond then continues his speech with an exaltation of the State which neither Hitler nor Stalin could improve on. "For a long time," continued the minister, "penetrated as I am with the principles of Machiavelli, I have been completely persuaded that individuals are of no account in politics. Secondary machines of government, men should work for the prosperity of the government, and not the government for the prosperity of men. Governments occupied with the individual are weak, the only vigorous one is that which counts itself for everything, and men for nothing; the greater or lesser number of slaves in the State is indifferent, what is essential is that the chains weigh heavily on the people, and that the sovereign should be despotic. While Rome was a democracy she was weak and feeble; when tyrants took authority she was mistress of the earth. All force should be concentrated in the sovereign, and since that force is only moral, since physically the masses are the more powerful, it can only be by an uninterrupted series of despotic actions that the government can acquire the physical force it lacks; otherwise it will only exist in ideal. When we wish to impose on others we must accustom them little by little to see in us what really doesn't exist, otherwise they will see us as we are and we will infallibly lose." "I have always believed," said Clairwil, "that the art of governing men is the one which demands the maximum of hypocrisy." "That is true," replied Saint-Fond, "and the reason is obvious: you can only govern men by deceiving them; one must be hypocritical to deceive them; the enlightened man will never let himself be led, therefore it is necessary to deprive him of enlightenment to lead him as we want, and that can only be done by hypocrisy. . . . The government must have more energy than the governed; well, if that of the governed is mixed with crimes, how can you expect the government itself not to be criminal? Are the punishments used against men anything except crimes? What excuses them? State necessity. . . ." Elsewhere he (Saint-Fond) develops his desire for a plutocratic oligarchy with a slave basis;⁷ he gained his position by sleeping with the king's mistress.

I have thought it better to give one fairly long and exhaustive quotation, rather than the large number of shorter ones that I had originally prepared. They are all of much the same tenor; they all exhibit the same greed for money and power; Machiavelli is continually quoted; and all exhibit the same hatred and fear of

the masses. The chief of the police at Rome, for example, plans to kill off all the unemployed on the grounds that 'they are not only a charge on the honest man, but will become dangerous if the dole is stopped'.⁸ *Juliette* is one of the most thorough analyses, as it is by fifty years the first, of a society ruled by money.

Noirceuil, one of Juliette's earlier lovers, gives her as a present an income of a thousand crowns with the remark that it was intended for the hospitals: 'The sick will have a few soups less, and you a few more fal-lals.'⁹ In *Aline et Valcour* the judge remarks: 'The happiness of being above others gives one a right to think differently from them; that is the first effect of superiority; the second is its abuse . . . which allows one man to betray the State, make his fortune and retire on the grounds that he is ruined (the abominable Sartine), another to destroy the internal trade of France, because his mistress's absurd plan is worth two million to him (the criminal Lenoir); and a hundred others get together to make a corner in the people's food, and then starve the same people by re-selling to them the food they have stolen from them at ten times its proper value.'¹⁰

At the head, at any rate nominally, of the different States, were kings. Nominally, for in some States the financiers and politicians held the real power; Saint-Fond is more powerful than the king himself. De Sade gives a rapid glance at the holders of the greater numbers of European thrones. He wrote in a period when royalty was particularly unfortunate in its representatives and rich in fools and monsters, France possessed the somewhat ludicrous Louis XVI and his wife; Tuscany, Leopold; Naples, the appalling Ferdinand and Caroline; Russia, Catherine the Great, nymphomaniac and poisoner . . . the list is tedious. De Sade has a certain amount of praise for Gustavus III of Sweden and more for Frederick of Prussia, the philosophical king;¹¹ and he passes over in silence the King of England. De Sade never takes kings very seriously, though his criticisms are not unfounded; he makes the perspicacious remark that if kings are beginning to lose credit in Europe it is their humanity which is destroying them.¹²

The accompaniment of tyranny is organized religion. 'When the strong wished to enslave the weak he persuaded him that a god had sanctified the chains with which he loaded him, and the latter, stupefied by misery, believed all he was told.'¹³ This point was dealt with in the last chapter, but a curious passage in *Aline et Valcour*, a discussion between a Frenchman and a Portuguese, is worth quoting. The Portuguese is complaining of the damage done to his country's commerce and agriculture by the Inquisition, and the preponderating place the English have gained in their internal commerce; the Frenchman advises a revolt against the Inquisition: 'Destroy and annihilate them; enchain these dangerous enemies of your freedom and commerce in their own chains; let the last auto-da-fé in Lisbon be these criminals. But if you ever had the courage to do this a very funny thing would happen; the English, who are

quite rightly the enemies of this monstrous tribunal, would nevertheless become its defenders; they would protect it because it serves their purpose; they would support it because it holds you in the subjection they desire; it would be all over again the story of the Turks protecting the Pope against the Venetians, so true is it that superstition is a powerful arm in the hands of despotism, and that our own interest often forces us to make others respect what we ourselves despise.¹⁴

Politics and finance are succinctly summed up in two sentences; 'Politics, which teach men to deceive their equals without being deceived themselves, that science born of falseness and ambition, which the statesman calls a virtue, the social man a duty, and the honest man a vice. . . .'¹⁵ The financier taught me about the raising of taxes — the atrocious system of enriching oneself alone at the expense of many unfortunates . . . without thereby helping the State.'¹⁶

War is simply public and authorized murder, in which hired men slaughter one another in the interests of tyrants.¹⁷ It proves nothing except the ambition of the people promoting it — 'The sword is the weapon of him who is in the wrong, the commonest resource of ignorance and stupidity.'¹⁸ It is merely imperial brigandage. 'When Bras-de-fer and his companions join together to rob a coach, are they any different to two sovereigns who join together to despoil a third? Yet the latter expect laurels and immortality for crimes unnecessarily committed, while the former will only get contempt, shame and the gibbet for crimes authorized by hunger, the most imperious of laws.'¹⁹ The inconsistency of governments is laughed at when 'they teach publicly the art of murder, and reward him who is most successful in practising it, and yet punish the man who gets rid of his enemy for a private reason'.²⁰ He had no patience with the notion of honour whether it concerned private duels or war. 'It is pride, not necessity, which makes tyrants order their generals to destroy other nations.'²¹ About duels, he says, 'Honour is an illusion born of human conventions and customs, which are merely based on absurdity; it is equally untrue that a man gains honour by assassinating his country's enemies and that he loses it by assassinating his own.'²²

The object of colonial expansion is to acquire cheap labour and raw materials: 'As long as a State's riches is counted in gold, the mineral being in the bowels of the earth, labour is necessary to get it up, therefore slavery is necessary and the subjugation of Negroes by the whites. . . .'²³ We are shown colonial expansion at work, in the person of a kindly and honourable Portuguese delegate employing every form of lying, bribery, and treachery for the aims of State; when he is acting for his prince he can commit crimes which would make him tremble if they were personal.²⁴ Understandably the great fear of the people of Tamoe in the South Seas is European colonization.

We have seen that de Sade described the English penetration of Portugal; similarly of Sweden he writes: 'The English are always ready to serve those they think they can swallow up one day, after having disturbed their trade or weakened their power by means of their usurious loans.'²⁵ It may be remarked in passing that de Sade seems to have had a great liking for the English; he is continually excluding them from his strictures and praising them for their honesty. He also prophesies a great future for the United States: 'The Republic of Washington will grow little by little, like that of Romulus, and will first subjugate America, and then make the rest of the world tremble.'²⁶

IV - THEIR RELATION TO THE POOR *- THE POOR*

BESIDES contractual relations there are also emotional connections between the haves and the have-nots. The feelings of the rich for the poor can be divided into two groups - dislike and fear on the one hand, pity and charity on the other. The former are the commoner. When Juliette was suddenly left orphaned and penniless she appealed for charity to the Mother Superior of the convent where she was being educated, thinking that as she had always been a great favourite of hers when she was rich, she would get help when she was poor. She was rudely rebuffed and at first could not understand why. Alas, I said to myself, why does my misfortune make her so cruel? Are rich Juliette and poor Juliette two different creatures? . . . Ah! I did not realize yet that poverty was a charge on wealth, nor did I know how much it was feared by the latter . . . to what extent wealth flees from it, and that the fear it has of being forced to relieve it results in a strong antipathy for it. But I continued reflecting, how is it that the libertine, nay criminal woman, does not fear the indiscretion of those whom she treats so brusquely? Another puerility on my part; I didn't know the insolence and effrontery in vice displayed by wealth and credit. Madame Delbène was the Superior of one of the most famous Abbeys in Paris, she had an income of 60,000 livres, influence with everyone of importance at Court and in town; to what extent should she not despise a poor girl like me, young, orphaned and penniless, who could only oppose her injustice with reclamations which would soon be disposed of, or complaints which, immediately treated as libels, would perhaps have gained for the girl who had the boldness to utter them, eternal loss of liberty! . . . "Very well," I said to myself, "my only plan is to try to become rich in my turn, then I will be as shameless as this woman, and will enjoy the same rights and the same pleasures."²⁷ Her plan succeeded; as Saint-Fond's mistress she became excessively rich, and a local famine gave her an excuse to put in practice the lesson she had learned. 'People came to beg for charity;

I was firm and with great impertinence coloured my refusal with the excuse of the enormous expenses my gardens were causing me. "How can I afford to give charity," I said insolently, "when I have to have mirrored boudoirs in my woods and alleys adorned with statues?"²⁸

This is the most common attitude; it is enhanced sometimes by the pleasure people feel in the contrast between their opulence and the surrounding misery. This trait is more general with financiers.²⁹

Among others, however, and particularly among the less rich, this attitude is replaced by the exercise of the 'vile virtues' pity and charity. 'Pity is a purely egoistical feeling, which makes us be sorry for the misfortunes of others which we fear for ourselves. If there were a person exempt from all human ills, not only would he not feel any sort of pity, he could not even conceive it. Another proof that pity is only a passive reaction . . . is that we are always more moved by a misfortune that happens to an unknown under our eyes than by that of our dearest friend a thousand miles away. . . . Another proof that this sentiment is founded purely on weakness and cowardice is that it is stronger in women and children than in men. . . . Similarly the poor, who are nearer to misery than the rich, are naturally more touched by the misfortunes chance offers to their eyes; since these ills are nearer to them they have greater sympathy with them. . . .'³⁰ De Sade considers pity an undesirable and insulting feeling.

Similarly charity 'is bad for the poor . . . and even more dangerous for the rich, who thinks he has acquired all the virtues when he has given a few shillings to the clergy or idlers - a sure method of covering your own vices by encouraging others'⁴⁸ Elsewhere charity is defined as 'a vice of pride, rather than a virtue of the soul'.³² De Sade continually harps on this theme, perhaps with the presentiment that in his old age he would be reduced to this indignity. (Despite his general scepticism, de Sade admits as verified presentiments, thought-reading, dowsing, clairvoyance and phantasms of the living.³³)

The attitude of the poor to the rich varies between a religious and patriotic resignation and complete cynicism. The poor do not figure largely in his works, nor are they very articulate. The adventuress la Dubois says to the resigned Justine, 'the hard-heartedness of the rich legitimizes the rascality of the poor; let their purse be opened to our wants, let humanity reign in their hearts, and virtues can establish themselves in ours; but as long as our misery, our patience in supporting it, our honesty and our slavery only help to double our burdens, our crimes become their work. . . . It amuses me to hear rich people, judges, magistrates, preach virtue to us; it is indeed difficult to refrain from stealing when one has three times more than one needs to live, indeed difficult never to think of murder when one is surrounded with flatterers and prostrate slaves, terribly hard truly to be temperate and sober when

pleasure intoxicates them and the most delicate food surrounds them, a real hardship to be truthful when they have no interest in lying.⁷⁸⁴ Later in the book, when Justine, more miserable than ever, meets la Dubois who has achieved prosperity, the latter explains, 'I want equality, I only preach that. If I have corrected the caprices of fate it is because, crushed and annihilated by the inequalities of fortune and rank, seeing on the one side tyranny and on the other misery and humiliation, I desired neither to shine with the pride of the rich nor to vegetate in the humility of the poor.'⁷⁸⁵

De Sade has some pathetic passages in which he describes the life of the poor. 'The unhappy man waters his bread with tears; a day's hard work hardly gives him enough to bring back in the evening to his family the wherewithal to preserve life; the taxes he is obliged to pay take away the greater part of his thin savings; his naked and illiterate children dispute with the beasts of the forest the vilest food, while his wife's breasts, dried up by want, cannot give to the nursing the first part of nourishment which will give him the strength to go, to get the rest, to share that of the wolves; till finally, bowed down under the weight of years, ill-treatment and grief, always under the hand of misfortune, he sees the end of his career coming, without the star of heaven having for one instant shone pure and serene on his humbled head.'⁷⁸⁶

In *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir* the young chevalier reproaches the libertine Dolmancé: 'When your body, tired out by pleasures alone, rests languidly on beds of down, look at theirs, worn out by the work which makes you rich, gather a little straw to protect them from the cold of the earth, whose surface they, like the beasts, have as only resting-place; give a glance to them when, surrounded by succulent dishes with which twenty chefs tickle daily your sensuality, these poor people dispute with the wolves the bitter roots of the dried earth; when laughter, graces and sport lead to your impure couch the most charming objects of Cythera's temple, see this unhappy man lying beside his sad wife, satisfied with the pleasures he gathers among tears, without suspecting that others exist; look at him when you refuse yourself nothing, and float in the midst of superfluity; look at him, I say, lacking even the first necessities of life; cast your eyes on his desolate family; see his trembling wife tenderly dividing herself between the attentions she owes to her husband languishing beside her and those ordered by Nature for the pledges of their love; deprived of the possibility of fulfilling any of these duties, so sacred for a sensitive mind, hear her, without trembling, if you can, ask you for the superfluity your cruelty refuses her. . . .' Dolmancé replies: 'You are young, as your conversation proves, and inexperienced; later you will not speak so well of men, when you know them. Their ingratitude dried up my heart, their perfidiousness destroyed in me those virtues for which I was born perhaps as much as you. . . .'⁷⁸⁷

These passages are over-written, but they do, I think, show real

feeling of a sort which the reputation of the monster-author would not lead one to expect; and it was probably of himself that de Sade thought when he quoted Marmontel's remark: 'Il y a un excès dans la sensibilité qui avoisine l'insensibilité.'³⁸

V - LAW AND JUSTICE - PRISON —THE DEATH PENALTY

It follows from the foregoing analysis of society that the law-courts only dispense a class justice, in favour of the rich. 'The judge generally takes the part of the stronger both by personal interest and the secret and invincible inclination which makes us all favour our equals.'³⁹ 'The case against a poor woman without credit or protection is quickly dealt with in France. Honesty is believed to be incompatible with misery, and in our law-courts poverty is sufficient proof against the accused. . . .'⁴⁰

The object of the law is not to prevent crime, but to keep crime within certain prescribed limits. 'The difference that laws have made is that instead of the strong having power as primitively, it is now the rich and well-born'⁴¹ (cf. origin of laws in last chapter). 'The laws of a people are never anything but the mass and the result of the interests of the legislators.'⁴² 'The object of laws is either to multiply crimes, or to allow them to be committed with impunity.'⁴³ Only the smaller fry among criminals get caught: 'I didn't steal enough, a little more boldness and all would have been kept quiet; it is only second-class malefactors who get caught.'⁴⁴ 'There are two sorts of criminals, one whose powerful fortune and immense credit put them out of danger, and the other, born poor, who will not be able to escape it if he is taken.'⁴⁵

When the law gets hold of a guilty man (or a supposed guilty man: 'A hundred innocent for one guilty, that is the spirit of the law'⁴⁶) its object is not reformation, but revenge. 'The laziness and folly of legislators led them to invent the law of talion. It was much easier to say, "Let us do to him what he has done," than to proportion spiritually and equitably the punishment to the crime.'⁴⁷ The stupidity of punishments made de Sade cry: 'Murderers, prisoners, fools of every country and every government, when will you prefer the science of knowing man to that of shutting him up and killing him?'⁴⁸

The ideas of justice and crime are anyhow purely local and arbitrary, as de Sade points out at great length. 'The claim of your semi-philosopher Montaigne that justice is eternal and unalterable at all times and places is false; it depends on human conventions, characters, temperaments, local morality. If this were so, the same author continues, it would be a truth so terrible that one would have to hide it from oneself. But why disguise such essential truths? Should man hide from any of them?'⁴⁹ In this connection his

pamphlet on the manner in which laws should be sanctioned, already described in the first chapter, should be remembered.

The punishments of the law were motivated by the spirit of revenge, and de Sade, who pronounced revenge unworthy of an honourable man (even reporting to the police)⁵⁰ five years before he so signally put his theories into practice considered the penalties then in vogue as barbarous as they were useless.

'I don't say that one should let crimes continue, but I claim that it is better first of all to decide, which hasn't been done, what really troubles society and what in fact doesn't do it any harm; once the tort is recognized people should work to cure it and extirpate it from the nation, and you don't succeed in doing that by punishment; if the law were wise it would never inflict any punishment except one which tends to correct the guilty and preserve them to the State. The law is false when it merely punishes, detestable when its only object is to destroy the criminal without teaching him, to frighten without improving him, and to commit an infamy as great as the original one without gaining anything from it.'⁵¹

The punishments used, then as now, were torture, imprisonment, and death. Torture, whether used for discovering evidence (third degree) or for punishment (the cat-o'-nine-tails, etc.) were for de Sade such obvious barbarities that their only use was to make the citizen of a country where they were employed blush for shame.²²

Mere deprivation of liberty was equally useless. 'The only excuse (of prisons) is the hope of correction; but you must know very little of man to imagine that prison can ever have that effect on him; you don't correct a malefactor by isolating him, but by giving him back to the society he has outraged; from there he should receive his daily punishment, and it is the only school at which he can improve; reduced to a fatal solitude, to a dangerous vegetation, to a tragic abandonment, his vices germinate, his blood boils, his head ferments; the impossibility of satisfying his desires fortifies the criminal cause of them, and he comes out slyer and more dangerous. . . . If your prisons . . . had produced even a single conversion . . . there would be some point in continuing them, but you cannot quote a single example of a man made better by chains. How can he be? How can one become better in the midst of depravity and degradation? Can one gain anything in the midst of the most contagious examples of greed, roguery and cruelty? Characters become degraded, morals corrupted; you become vile, lying, ferocious, sordid, treacherous, mean, underhand, a perjurer like those who surround you; in a word all your virtues are changed to vices and you come out full of horror for mankind, occupied only in harming them and revenging yourself.'⁵³

As an example they are equally useless; crimes are committed for two reasons - either want or passion. If either stimulus is strong

enough no amount of fear is going to restrain the criminal; the heaviness of penalties does not decrease the amount of crimes; their only result is to make the petty criminal more desperate.⁵⁴ New laws merely create new crimes; the only solution is to change society to a form in which crime does not become a necessity for anyone. 'Destroy the interest a person has in breaking the law and you will take away the means from him of contravening it.'⁵⁵

The only exception to this rule is the case of criminal natures who commit crime because it is a crime, for the sole pleasure of breaking laws. 'Against such it is useless to make laws; the stronger the ramparts raised against them, the greater the pleasure in breaking them down . . . such people are rare . . . one should try to win them by kindness and honour, or else attempt to make them change the motives of their habits.'⁵⁶

His final conclusions are: 'Honour is man's guiding rein; if you know how to use it properly you can lead him where you will; with a whip always in your hand you humiliate, discourage and finally lose him.'⁵⁷ 'If you destroy a man's self-respect you make a criminal out of him.'⁵⁸ 'Once a criminal is recognized as dangerous he must be withdrawn from society . . . either by banishment or by making him better by forcing him to be useful to the people he has outraged. But don't throw him inhumanly into those poisoned cloacas, where all that surrounds him is so gangrened that it becomes uncertain which will finish his corruption the quicker, the frightful examples he receives from those in charge of him or the hardened impenitence of his unhappy companions . . . murder him even less, for blood repairs nothing and instead of one crime you now have two. . . '⁵⁹

The whole passage on crime and punishment is quite remarkable; had space permitted the whole fifty pages⁶⁰ from which the above extracts are drawn were worthy of quotation; doubly remarkable indeed, for not only is it in accordance with the ideas and experience of the most modern penologists both theoretical and practical; it is almost unique in being the considered opinion of a prisoner written while he was still in prison.

Both in his works and in his life de Sade showed himself an inveterate enemy of the death penalty; it is a theme continually recurring in his works from the earliest onwards. The one case in which he hesitated was that of a crime against the State; but even for this he preferred exile. His numerous arguments against it reduce to the syllogism, 'Is murder a crime or not? If it is not, why punish it? If it is, why punish it by a similar crime?'⁶¹ His account of its origin is curious. 'The Celts justified their horrible practice of human sacrifice with the excuse that the gods could only be appeased by the redemption of one man's life by another's. . . . When contact with the Romans altered their customs the victims destined to the gods were no longer chosen among the old men or the prisoners of war; only criminals were sacrificed, always under the absurd supposition that nothing was so pleasing to God's

altars as the blood of man. . . . When governments became Christian anything which that doctrine condemned was turned into a capital crime; little by little your sins were turned into crimes; you thought you had the right to imitate the thunder you placed in the hands of divine justice, and you hanged and broke on the wheel because you imagined that God did so. . . . Nearly all the laws of St. Louis are founded on these sophistries. We know it and we don't change, because it is far simpler to hang men than to find out why we condemn them. . . .'⁶²

VI - OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

(a) *Patriotism*. De Sade was always a strong local patriot. In his earliest work he writes: 'Kings and their majesties alone impress me; he who does not love his country and his king is not fit to live.'⁶³ His respect for kings soon diminished, but his love for his country continues all through his writings. He was, however, always against aggression or expansion; he advises his country to 'Fortify its frontiers . . . and renounce the spirit of conquest; only occupied in protecting your boundaries you will no longer have the necessity of keeping up a large army. By this means you would give back a hundred thousand men to agriculture and do away with the licence and debauchery of the barracks. . . .'⁶⁴ The enthusiasm he professed for the republic has already been seen. This love of his land did not, however, carry with it necessarily the idea of a sovereign State; one of the characters in *Juliette* is made a member of a Lodge at Stockholm, in which the oath is taken 'to exterminate all kings; to wage eternal war on the Catholic religion and the Pope; to preach the liberty of nations; and to found a universal republic.'⁶⁵ See also Section II in the following chapter.

(b) *The Directoire*. Obviously de Sade could not express openly his criticisms of the actual government at the time of publication; and although *Juliette* and in a less degree *La Nouvelle Justine* are a tacit criticism in nearly every line, there is only one occasion in which de Sade openly criticizes the Republic, and then only in a footnote. The occasion is the initiation of a minor character into the Masonic Lodge at Stockholm mentioned above where a senatorial anti-monarchical conspiracy is being hatched; de Sade takes advantage of this opportunity to attack the Masons for their self-seeking under the cover of philanthropy. The following interrogation between the Master and the man who wants to become a member takes place:

Q. What motives make you detest the despotism of kings?

A. Jealousy, ambition, pride, desperation in being lorded over, the desire to lord it over others myself.

Q. Is the people's happiness of any importance to you?

A. Not in the least. I am only interested in my own.

Q. And what rôle do the passions play in your way of thinking about politics?

A. The strongest. I have never believed that the so-called statesman had any other real intentions than the fullest gratification of his desires; his plans, the alliances he makes, his projects, his taxes, even his laws are designed for his personal happiness. The public good never enters his thoughts and all that the duped masses see him do is merely to increase his own wealth or power.'

To this dialogue he adds the revealing footnote: '*Spirit of the revolution of Stockholm, have you not somehow or other come to Paris?*'⁶⁶

(c) *Family Group and Position of Women*. In the family group de Sade saw the greatest danger to equality and to the State; family interests are necessarily anti-social. He proposed to avoid this inconvenience by the establishment of national schools for all children.⁶⁷

He considered that the position of women both sexually and legally was anomalous and unfair; consequently he demanded *complete equality of women and men* in every circumstance.⁶⁸ This notion of de Sade's is indeed so important that Guillaume Apollinaire one of his most intelligent commentators considered that it was chiefly to illustrate this thesis that he wrote *Justine* and *Juliette* and chose heroines instead of heroes.

(d) *Education*. Education was for de Sade potentially of supreme importance, and it is therefore comprehensible that he complained of the current education which was then even more stupid and unsuitable than it is today. 'Instead of teaching young men what they ought to know they put in its place a thousand idiocies which are only good to be trampled on as soon as one reaches the age of reason. It would seem that they were only trying to produce monks - bigotry, fables, useless follies, and never a sensible moral maxim. Go further, ask a young man his true duties to society, ask him what he owes to himself and to others, what line of conduct he should take to be happy; he will tell you that he has learned to go to Mass and recite litanies, but he doesn't understand a word of what you are talking about, that he has learned to sing and dance, but not to live among men.'⁶⁹

(e) *Agriculture*. De Sade agreed with the contemporary physiocrats in considering agriculture not only the main industry of man and of countries, but also as the only true source of all wealth.⁷⁰ 'The man who goes to mine gold from the bosom of the earth and leaves the friendly soil which would nourish him with far less trouble is an extravagant fool worthy of the greatest scorn.'⁷¹ He considered that to a great extent the actual impoverishment of France was due to the too great centralization and the absence of the proprietors from their lands, so that 'instead of lords living despotically on their own lands thirty thousand intriguing

slaves fawn before one man'⁷² - a criticism which history amply justifies.

(f) *Population*. De Sade was much occupied with the idea of the optimum population, and in *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir* he reaches conclusions very similar to those put forward by Malthus three years later in his *Essay on Population*. He did not pronounce definitely whether France had passed the optimum, though he rather suspected it had; the future danger was anyhow grave.⁷³ He pointed out the contradiction of France complaining of a falling birth-rate, and insisting on the celibacy of monks, nuns, soldiers, and other functionaries. He was against the preservation of malformed or diseased children: 'Any child who is born without the necessary qualities which will allow him to become one day a useful citizen has no right to life and the best thing to do is to deprive him of it the moment he gets it.'⁷⁴

VII - BUTUA - A PARABLE OF CIVILIZATION

THE second volume of *Aline et Valcour* consists of the description of the strange voyages of a young man called Sainville. By a series of odd adventures he is cast on to the Gold Coast in Central Africa. He tries to make his way across the continent and after some days' hard travelling he has the misfortune to observe a scene of torture and cannibalism practised by one Negro tribe on their captured enemies; but, as de Sade remarks in a footnote, 'If it is a crime among savages to be conquered, why should they not be allowed to punish criminals in this way, just as we punish ours by similar proceedings? So that if the same horror is found in two nations the one has no right to be indignant with the other, because the first acts with a little more ceremony; it is only the philosopher who admits few crimes and kills no one who has a right to be indignant with both.'

Sainville is taken prisoner and led before the King of Butua, who grants him his life provided he will take up the post of inspecting the candidates for his harem, a post up till then occupied by a renegade Portuguese, who is appointed his mentor and guide.

The inhabitants of Butua are cruel and licentious cannibals. Women are in a completely inferior position, little above that of the beasts of the field, whose work they have to do. The king, who is also the high priest, is an absolute monarch; the provinces are under the rule of chiefs only answerable to the king, to whom they have to pay a tribute; but since they have merely to collect it by any means they see fit from the peasants this doesn't present much difficulty.

The only people who equal the king and his nobles in power are the priests. They worship a god half human and half snake, who is the cause of all things, the prime mover of the Universe. This god

delights in human sacrifice, and after a man has transgressed his rules he can only be absolved by a sacrifice (preferably the object of his transgression) and a payment to the church. There are numerous other superstitions, including a belief in the resurrection and paradise, in which white women and freshly cooked little boys will be at their complete disposal. There is complete collaboration and understanding between the king and the priests, and the latter can use the law to enforce or punish any neglect, slight, or failure to pay tithe, with the utmost rigour, as in Europe.

The priests have complete charge of education. The principal and practically the only thing they teach women is the most entire resignation to the will of their husbands; the men are taught to submit themselves, first to the will of the church, then to the king, and lastly to their particular chiefs; they should be ready to lay down their life for any of these causes.

Outside the family, in which the father is completely master, with power of life and death, the peasants are severely punished for the slightest crimes. 'For it is not as though there were no laws, there are perhaps too many, but all have a tendency to favour the strong against the weak.' Theft and murder are disregarded among the nobles but punished with the utmost rigour among the people; they are punished personally by the local chief who calls in his friends to help him; for such occasions are parties of pleasure, corresponding to hunting parties in Europe.

With the exception of the king, whose succession is gained by trials of strength and endurance, property goes exclusively from father to eldest son; this, however, actually only applies to the nobles, for the poor possess practically nothing, and what little they do is always liable to be taken from them.

The people are devout, credulous, superstitious and almost illiterate. Their few sciences, such as astronomy, are frowned on by the priests, and almost smothered in superstition. What little medicine is known is in the hands of a sort of secondary priesthood, who never give help except for payment. The population is falling rapidly, owing to the ill-usage of the women. The people get drunk on a sort of alcohol made from maize. They have absolutely no thought for the future. Their commerce consists of the exchanging of rice and maize for fish from their neighbours; this trade is often a cause of war.

The king is an exaggerated image of his countrymen, even more cruel, lecherous and superstitious than they are. The description of him and his habits is completely nauseating. The people might have revolted against him without the aid and support of the priests.

This people and their customs are explained and commented on by the renegade Portuguese, who, after a first revolt, bowed to the necessity of living among such people, and even ended in acquiring most of their habits. The most monstrous and revolting aspects are

justified by him as being natural, since they do not upset the natives, and are found elsewhere in the world.

I have not emphasized the numerous descriptions of cannibalism, cruelty, infanticide and lust which are given, as I think I have already made tolerably clear the nature of the country into which de Sade claimed that he alone had penetrated.

Politics II – Suggested Solutions

What is now true was once only imagined.

– W. BLAKE

Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Nought loves another as itself,
Nor venerates another so,
Nor is it possible for thought
A greater than itself to know.

– W. BLAKE

Songs of Experience

I – UTOPIA 1788

By good fortune Sainville managed to escape from Butua; he made his way to the coast where he succeeded in hiring a ship with which he intended to make his way home. But a series of storms drove him far out of his course into uncharted and temperate waters in the South Seas. When provisions and water were nearly exhausted he arrived at an unknown island; he approached it in the hope of being able to re-provision. The natives were friendly, and one who spoke French conducted him to the king. To make his way to his house he had to pass through the city of Tamoe; it was town-planned, consisting of circular boulevards set with uniform two-storey houses surrounded by gardens. When he reached the king's house he was astounded to notice that except for its slightly larger size it was no different from any other; there were no guards and no parade of any sort; people entered freely. The old King Zamé came to greet him; he offered him hospitality and anything he might require; he kept Sainville as his guest for a fortnight, telling him his history and showing him his kingdom; he talked French fluently.

In his youth Zamé had been sent by his father to Europe to learn what civilization could teach him which would be of benefit to Tamoe; and plentifully equipped with gold, which was the island's only metal, he made the grand tour. Except for some mechanical devices all that he saw of Europe frightened and disgusted him; and he returned home with the intention of avoiding as far as might be the terrible inequalities and oppressions, the superstition,

the misery, the fear and the crimes with which he saw the lives of all but a handful of Europeans darkened. He brought back with him a number of tools for agriculture and manufacture, and a certain amount of skill in various trades.

He found the greatest causes of European misery in four things – private property, class distinctions, religion and family life. He therefore proceeded to abolish or transform these institutions. Absolutely all property was made over to the State. Under certain conditions people had the usufruct of property, provided they developed it properly, during their life-time; on death it reverted automatically to the State. The State controlled all manufactures. Since everybody was working for the State, directly or indirectly, and since all had equal wealth – or rather commodities and comfort – class distinctions were abolished.

As soon as children were weaned they were put into a State school, where they remained till marriage at the age of fifteen. The parents could visit them at these institutions as often as they wished, but the children must not leave. They became there just as good sons and better citizens. The children were divided into three groups, up to six, six to twelve, and twelve to fifteen. In the first two groups they were taught such things as are suitable to their years, including reading, writing and a little arithmetic; in their last three years they were taught their civic duties and practical agriculture; the colleges were supported by gardens worked by the students. They were also prepared for marriage and it was impressed on them that such a state is a mutual partnership and can only be happily maintained by the efforts of both parties. The boys in addition were taught military drill, and as recreation dancing, wrestling and all sports, the girls cooking, sewing and clothes-making, these latter being exclusively women's jobs. When a boy reached the age of fifteen he was taken to a girls' school to choose a wife, unless through temperament or tastes he felt a strong aversion to matrimony, in which case he was allowed to remain single on condition that he undertook public works. When a boy had chosen a girl he met her daily for a week under the supervision of the school masters and mistresses. At the end of that period they were asked to decide whether they would be married or not; if either of the parties disliked the idea the boy had to choose again, continuing until a mutual agreement was reached.

When a couple finally decided to marry they were given a house and ground by the State. For the first two years they were helped and advised by their parents and neighbours – a service which they had to repay by assistance in old age.

The greater part of the population was engaged in small-holding agriculture. If, however, people preferred some other job, they were allowed to take it. If it was a job which only called for occasional practice, such as building, medicine, etc., they had their plot of land the same as the others and during their enforced absences

the land was looked after by the bachelors and divorced; if, however, it was a full-time job, such as work in a factory, they were given a landless house and supplied with goods by the State. The only direct taxation was in kind for this purpose and for public granaries which held two years' supply of wheat against famine.

Divorce was granted at the request of either party on the following grounds: ill-health, sterility (either voluntary or otherwise), bad temper, cruelty or adultery. Nobody was allowed more than two divorces. Unmarried and divorced people had smaller houses and less land.

There were asylums for lonely or infirm old age attached to the schools; in the capital they were attached to the king's house.

If people neglected their land they were moved to uncultivated ground where greater effort was required for the same result; if they showed improvement their original home was given back to them.

There were no prisons and no death penalty. Moral faults were punished by a distinguishing dress and the refusal of privileges, chiefly visiting the king. More serious crimes were announced by the town crier through the town. A convicted murderer was put into an open boat with food for a month, and his description circularized so that he could not land elsewhere on the island. People with irremediable anti-social characters were exiled. Outstanding civic virtue was rewarded by military titles - which are meaningless but flatter the holder. In passing judgment on a man all his actions were taken into account. Only crimes which harm society were taken any notice of. Brothels were forbidden, as the fifteen-hundred-year-old error of France which sacrifices part of its female population to preserve the honour of the other part is as repugnant as it is foolish. All civil cases were satisfied by compensation.

All luxury arts were forbidden. Painting, music, dancing, the theatre were encouraged but were only developed by amateurs. All the art was inclined to furnish moral propaganda.

The boys' schools and the towns other than the capital were under the direction of elderly bachelors, to show that if they could not be useful in one way they are in another. They were excluded only if the temperamental reasons which caused them to choose celibacy were obviously anti-social. The commanders of the towns were changed annually. The girls' schools were under the direction of widows, or divorced women if the reason for their divorce did not render them unsuitable.

There was no standing army, but all male citizens were potential soldiers. Their only fear was European invasion and colonization, against which they had erected defences. They occasionally had field days.

All priests were banished and religion reduced to a vague theistic Nature worship, of a voluntary nature. There were no temples and no vested interest in religion. There were also no professional lawyers and discussion of theology or law was punished. There was

no money, and commerce was restricted to exchange within the island. Any surplus was given away to their less advanced neighbours. Zamé advocated economic self-sufficiency.

By these measures Zamé claimed to have practically eliminated misery and crime. By suppressing luxury and introducing equality he did away with pride, greed, covetousness and ambition. By suppressing religion he did away with wars and massacres. By doing away with the family group he destroyed the greatest enemy of equality and the State; by doing away with heritable property he abolished the reasons for parricide and infanticide. With equality there was no reason for theft or revolution or possibility for charity, except the help of neighbours and the sick. The ease of divorce and the equality of the sexes did away with the greater number of sexual crimes; such vices as were not affected by these measures were done away with – not by suppression, which is the best means of propagation – but by public opinion, which was manifested by disgust, ridicule and tolerance. Economic self-sufficiency eliminated a great deal of the friction which leads to war. The State was the unrivalled and unquestioned possessor of all wealth.

As for Zamé himself, his chief object had been not to be feared but loved. 'Your sovereigns only know how to be kings: I have learned to be a man,' he claimed in almost the same words as the author of the *Zauberflöte* used three years later. He had nothing which the poorest of his subjects hadn't got. Like them he was a vegetarian and water drinker, not from motives of religion, but of diet and humanity. At Sainville's expressed surprise he retorted: 'Do you think I could eat if I thought that the gold dishes in which I was served were got at the expense of my fellow citizens and that the weakly children of those who make such luxury possible would only have to support their sad life black bread ground with misery, washed down with tears of grief and despair?' But his work was nearly done; when he has finished his task – which includes re-educating his son, who showed homosexual tendencies, to the love of the beautiful artisan's daughter to whom he had been married – he will lay down his crown; even so modified a kingship is unsuitable to his countrymen; for them, as for France, only a complete republic would satisfy their true desires. Frequently Zamé prophesies the coming republic in France.¹

It was probably this portion of *Aline et Valcour* which was the cause of its condemnation in 1815 and 1830.

II – PLAN FOR A EUROPEAN FEDERATION, 1788

THE following is part of a dialogue between a sort of Robin Hood chief of a band of robbers called Brigandos and a noble he is holding to ransom.

Brigandos: Since we are talking about politics let me tell you of a plan of mine; I want to redivide Europe and reduce it to four republics - the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western.

Nobleman: Why do you choose that vicious form of government?

Brigandos: It is the best of all.

Nobleman: Which is precisely why you will never be able to make people who have been weighed down by the yoke of monarchy accept it. It is possible to pass from good to evil - it is the progress of nature which tends ceaselessly to degradation; the contrary is not practicable.

Brigandos: Rome started with kings; she only became republican after having realized all the dangers of a monarchy.

Nobleman: Granted; but Republican Rome was subjugated in its turn, and the chains of the Caesars were heavier than those of the Tarquins; I assure you that you will not find a single republic which the aristocracy has not gangrened. And since aristocratic government is the worst of all, don't wish that sort of rule on Europe. I repeat that despotism is always nearer a republican than a monarchical government.

Brigandos: Yes, when it has the nobles at its head, as in Venice; then obviously the complete oppression of the people would follow. But a people who would revolt, destroy the monarchy and establish its base on the imprescribable rights and duties of man would be a model to all, and that is the form of government I desire to give to Europe. Let me go on with my divisions, for the multitude of little states drives me to despair. I divide our continent into four republics as follows: The Western Republic will consist of France, Spain, Portugal, Majorca, Minorca, Corsica and Sardinia, on condition that these countries get rid of all their inquisitors and clergy and send all such garglers of blest bread to the middle of Africa to say their Masses. The Northern Republic will be composed of Sweden and its dependencies, England and its dependencies, Belgium, Holland, Westphalia, Pomerania, Denmark, Ireland and Greenland. Russia will form the Eastern Republic; I want her to give to the Turks whom I expel from Europe all her Asiatic possessions, which could only be useful to her on the supposition of her wishing to trade by land with China, which she doesn't do; in recompense I give her Poland, Tartary and Turkey in Europe. The Southern Republic will consist of the whole of Germany, Hungary and Italy, from which I exile the Pope, for nothing could be more useless to my project than a sodomitical priest with an income of twelve millions, whose only business is to distribute useless indulgences and agnuses. The Republic will have Sicily and all the islands between her and Africa. That is my division. I desire eternal peace between these four governments; I want them to give up all dealings with America, which is merely ruining them, and to limit themselves to mutual trade; and above all I want them to have a single religion, a simple and pure cult free from idolatry and monstrous dogmas ...

a religion in fact that the people can follow without having recourse to that insolent vermin which is erected as mediator between their weakness and heaven; and which only succeeds in deceiving without improving them. According to my plan Danzig will be a free city where each republic will have a senate. There all discussions will terminate amicably and the decisions of the judges will become the laws of the states; if the decisions arrived at are not satisfying, ten deputies from each republic can come and fight in person, without exposing millions of men to the danger of killing one another for interests which are very rarely theirs.

Nobleman: This plan was imagined by a certain French Abbé de Saint-Pierre who wrote about it at the beginning of the century.

Brigandos: Not at all, sir; I know the book you speak about. The Abbé didn't divide Europe in this way; he left all the little sovereign states which agitate and divide it; he didn't, as I do, join these powers together, while suppressing what is harmful in them; in a word the Abbé de Saint Pierre renounced the system of equilibrium in favour of that of alliances; I only erect the system of alliances as a consolidation of that of equilibrium, and therefore my plan is better.

Nobleman: It wouldn't ensure eternal peace.

Brigandos: To the extent that it equalizes, it diminishes the chances of war.

Nobleman: Ambition will still be the same; it is the poison of man's heart and will only disappear with him.

Brigandos: This passion would now be motiveless. The reason why one nation declares war on another is because it wishes to recover or to invade territory – in any case because it wishes to have as much as or more than the nation it attacks. But if the nations are equal the attack becomes unjust, whence, in my system you would have three states against one, and the aggressor, knowing this, would keep the peace. It is very difficult to establish equilibrium between a large number of unequal weights; nothing is easier when the four weights are of the same measure.

Nobleman: But you must at least have a patriarch if you drive away the Pope: religion must have a head.

Brigandos: My dear sir, a good religion only needs a God; start by reaching a unanimous agreement on the essence and attributes of the one you admit by agreeing that he only needs our hearts and that the rest is as dangerous as it is useless. Since there would be then no necessity for you to cut one another's throats concerning the fashion in which God should be served you would have no need of a head; it is almost always on this account that you have fought one another about your gods; without the head's debaucheries and disorders Luther would never have separated; and consider the oceans of blood that disagreement has spilt. No, sir, no Pope; a God is already plenty; I must consider you all very sensible to allow

you that; the system of such an existence is the most dangerous present one can give to fools.²

III - ANARCHY 1794?

THE following is a portion of a conversation between two Italians whom Juliette meets in Rome.

A. If we were convinced of the indifference of all our actions, if we realized that those we call just and unjust are seen quite differently by Nature, we would make fewer false calculations. But the prejudices of childhood deceive us and will continue to lead us into error as long as we have the weakness to listen to them. It would seem as though the torch of reason only lights us when we are no longer in a position to profit from its rays, and it is only after folly has succeeded folly that we manage to discover the source of all those that ignorance has made us commit. The laws of the land still almost always serve us as compass to distinguish the just from the unjust. We say such an action is forbidden by the law, therefore it is unjust; it is impossible to find a more mistaken manner of judging than this, for the law is founded on the general interest; now nothing is more in contradiction with the general interest than particular interest, and at the same time nothing is juster than the latter; therefore nothing is more unjust than the law which sacrifices all particular interests to general interests. But man, you object, wishes to live in society and therefore must sacrifice some portion of his private happiness to that of the public. Agreed; but why do you want him to have made such a pact without being sure of gaining as much as he sacrifices? Now, he gains nothing from the pact he has made in consenting to the laws; for you inhibit him far more than you satisfy him, and for one occasion in which the law protects him, there are a thousand when it stands in his way; therefore either the laws should not be consented to or they should be made infinitely milder. The only use of law has been to postpone the annihilation of prejudices, to keep us longer under the shameful yoke of error; law is a restraint which man has placed on man, when he saw with what ease he broke all other restraints; how, after that, could he suppose the *supplementary* restraint could ever be of any use? There are punishments for the guilty, agreed; but I only see in them cruelties and no means of making man better, and that is, to my mind, what one ought to work at. Besides one escapes these punishments with the greatest ease, and that certainly encourages the spirit of the man who has made up his mind. Let us convince ourselves once and for all that laws are merely useless and dangerous; their only object is to multiply crimes or to allow them to be committed with impunity on account of the secrecy they necessitate. Without laws and religions it is impossible to imagine the degree of glory and grandeur human knowledge would have attained by now; the way

these base restraints have retarded progress is unbelievable; and that is the sole service they have rendered to man. People have dared declaim against the passions and enchain them with laws. But compare the one with the other; let us see whether passions or laws have done more good to mankind. Who can question the truth of Helvetius' remark that passions in the moral sphere correspond to movement in the physical? The inventions and the marvels of the arts are only due to strong passions; they should be regarded, the same author continues, as the productive germ of the spirit, and the mighty spring of great actions. Individuals who are not animated by strong passions are merely mediocre beings. It is only strong passions which can produce great men; when one is no longer, or when one ceases to be passionate, one becomes stupid. This point established, are not laws dangerous which inhibit the passions? Compare the centuries of anarchy with those of the strongest legalism in any country you like and you will see that it is only when the laws are silent that the greatest actions appear. If they regain their despotism a dangerous lethargy dulls all men's spirits; if you no longer see vices you can hardly find a virtue; the springs get rusty and revolutions are prepared.

B. Then you would do away with laws?

A. Yes. I maintain that man, returned to a state of nature, would be far happier than is possible under the ridiculous yoke of the law. I don't want man to renounce any portion of his strength or potentialities. He has no need of laws to get justice done to him; Nature has given him the instinct and the necessary force to get it for himself; and that justice he will make for himself will always be more prompt than that which he can hope for from the languorous hand of the law, because in the former case he will merely consider his own interest and the wrong he has suffered, whereas a people's laws are never anything else but the mass and the result of the interests of all the people who have co-operated in their erection.

B. But without laws you will be oppressed.

A. What does it matter to me if I am oppressed if I have the right to do likewise; I would rather be oppressed by my neighbour whom I can oppress in my turn, than by the law against which I am powerless. I have far less reason to fear my neighbour's passions than the law's injustice, for my neighbour's passions are controlled by mine, whereas nothing stops or controls the injustices of the law. All man's faults are in Nature; therefore there can be no better laws than hers; she imprints a single one in the heart of all men - to satisfy ourselves to refuse our passions nothing, whatever the cost to others. So do not try to inhibit the impulsions of this universal law, whatever the effects may be; you have no right to stop them; leave the care of that to him who is outraged; if he is harmed he will know how to defend himself. The men who thought that from the necessity of living together that of making laws derived fell into the greatest error; they had no more need of laws united than isolated. A

universal sword of justice is useless; this sword is naturally in the hands of everyone.

B. But everyone will not use it properly, and wickedness will become general . . .

A. That is impossible. Peter will never be unjust to Paul if he knows that Paul can revenge himself immediately for the injustice; but he will be if he knows he has merely to fear the laws which he can get round, or from which he can escape. I will go further, I will grant you that without laws the sum of crimes increases, that without laws the universe would be a volcano from which the most horrible crimes would erupt every minute; in that state of perpetual lesion there would be even fewer disadvantages; there would doubtless be far less than under the rule of laws, for often the law strikes the innocent, and to the mass of victims produced by the criminal you must add that produced by the unfairness of the law; under anarchy you would have those victims fewer. Certainly you would have those sacrificed by crime, but you will not have those immolated by the iniquity of the law; for since the oppressed would have the right to revenge himself he would surely only punish his aggressor.

B. But anarchy which opens the door to arbitrariness gives necessarily the cruel image of despotism . . .

A. That too is a mistake; it is the abuse of law which leads to despotism; the despot is the man who makes the law . . . who makes it speak or who uses it to further his own interests. Take away this method of abuse from the despot and you will have no more tyrants. There has not been a single tyrant who hasn't made use of laws to exercise his cruelties; everywhere where man's rights will be sufficiently fairly divided for everybody to be in a position to revenge himself for the injuries he receives there will surely never be a despot, for he would be struck down by the first victim he would try to immolate. Tyrants are never born in anarchy, you only see them raise themselves up in the shadow of the laws or get authority from them. The reign of laws is therefore vicious and inferior to anarchy; the strongest proof of my proposition is the necessity a government finds itself in to plunge itself into anarchy when it wishes to remake its constitution. To abrogate its old laws it is obliged to establish a lawless revolutionary régime; and from this régime finally other laws are born. But this second state is necessarily less pure than the former, since it derives from it, since it has been necessary to bring into force the first good thing, *anarchy*, to arrive at the second good thing, the *Constitution of the State*. Men are only pure in a state of Nature; as soon as they go away from it they are degraded. Give up, I say to you, give up the idea of making man better by laws; you merely make him thereby more cunning and more wicked . . . never more virtuous.

B. But crime is a plague on earth; the more laws there are, the fewer crimes.

A. That too is wrong. The multitude of laws makes the multitude of crimes. . . .³

This theme is again developed at length in the last volume of *Juliette* by another Italian. 'Give man back to Nature, she will lead him far better than your laws: Above all destroy those vast cities, where the conglomeration of vices forces you to repressive laws. What need has man to live in society? Give him back to the wild forests where he was born and let him do there all that he can; then his crimes, as isolated as he, will do no harm and your restraints become useless: savage man knows only two needs – hunger and lust – both natural, and nothing which he can do to assuage either can be criminal. All that produces in him other passions is the work of civilization and society. . . .'⁴

This last volume, with its added bitterness, and its lack of notes to bring it up to date, is probably later than the rest of the work, and may well date from 1797, when the whole work was first published. By the time the passage quoted above was written de Sade had lost all hope. He had returned to the hopeless pessimism of earlier years when he had written, 'How tempted I am to go and live among bears when I consider the multitude of dangerous abuses, the crowd of intolerable follies which thanks to a few musical comedies and songs, people don't even seem to suspect.'⁵

IV – PLAN OF LEGISLATION FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC 1795

ABOUT a third of the *Philosophie dans le Boudoir* is occupied by a pamphlet entitled *Frenchmen, a further effort if you wish to be Republicans!* This pamphlet is a hundred pages long and therefore it is impossible to give more than a précis of it; this is a pity, as it shows de Sade at his most typical and vigorous. The passages which are quoted verbally will be distinguished by quotation marks. It is divided into two sections – religion and laws or morals.*

Religion

'I am going to offer you far-reaching ideas; if people will listen to them and reflect on them some if not all may rest; I will have contributed in some part to the progress of illumination and will be content. I do not disguise the fact that I am troubled at the slowness of our advance; and I am disturbed by the realization that we are on the eve of missing our aim again. Can one believe that it

* The word 'mœurs' is ambiguous, containing at the same time the ideas of 'morals' and 'customs'. I have used only the first, but hope readers will keep in mind the double significance.

will be reached when we have been given laws? Don't imagine it. What are laws without religions? We need a cult, and a cult made for the republican character which will remove the danger of ever returning to that of Rome. In an age when we are convinced that religion should be founded on morality, and not morality on religion, we need a religion which goes with our customs, which would be as it were the development and necessary consequence, and which can raise the soul and hold it at the level of that precious liberty which is today its only idol.

'Can Christianity be suitable for a free warrior people? No, my compatriots, don't believe it. If unhappily for him the Frenchman should bury himself again in the veils of Christianity the pride, tyranny and despotism of the priests . . . and the lowness, stupidity and platitudes of this religion would lower the pride of the republican soul and quickly place it again under the yoke its energy has just thrown off. Never let us forget that this puerile religion was one of the best arms in the hands of our tyrants; one of its first dogmas is *Give unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's*, but we have dethroned Caesar and we do not intend to give him anything more. You would be deceiving yourselves, Frenchmen, if you think that a clergy which has taken the oath will be any different from a refractory one - there are some vices which are incurable. Within ten years by means of Christianity with its superstitions and prejudices, your priests, despite their poverty, would regain their former empire over your soul; they would chain you to kings again because these two powers mutually aid one another, and your republican edifice would fall down, deprived of foundations.'

It is not enough to prune the tree of superstition, it must be eradicated root and branch; freedom and equality are so far from the ideas of Christ's ministers that they would do everything to destroy them, overtly or covertly. Their actual poverty is no restraint; it was the same at the beginning of Christianity. 'Annihilate for ever that which one day may destroy your work. Consider that the fruit of your efforts is destined to your grandchildren, and your duty and your honour demand that you do not leave them any of the germs which could one day replunge them into that chaos from which we have emerged with such difficulty.'

These prejudices are already being dissipated; the people have suppressed the temples and thrown over the idols; it is agreed that marriage is now merely a civil act. But you mustn't stop there. 'The whole of Europe, with its hand ready on the bandage that blinds it, awaits from you the effort which should tear it from their eyes. Make haste; don't allow *holy Rome*, which is making every effort to repress you, the opportunity to keep a few proselytes. . . . Frenchmen, I repeat that Europe awaits from you deliverance from the sceptre and the thurible. You cannot free it from royalist tyranny without breaking the reins of superstition; the two are too intimately linked; if you allow one to subsist you will soon fall back under the empire of

both. A republican should not bow the knee either before an imaginary being or a vile imposter; his unique gods should be *courage* and *liberty*. Rome disappeared when Christianity was preached, and France is lost if she still reveres it. . . .

'To convince ourselves of this let us examine the few individuals who remain attached to the senseless cult of our fathers and we will see that they are the irreconcilable enemies of the present system, that in their number is that caste, so justly despised, of royalists and aristocrats. Let the slave of a crowned brigand bow, if he will, before an idol of flour – such an object is suitable for his muddy soul; he who can serve kings should adore gods! But for us, my compatriots, for us to crawl under such despicable restraints, rather a thousand deaths than another enslavement! Since we consider some cult necessary let us imitate those of the Romans; actions, passions, heroes were the worthy objects of their worship. Such idols elevated the soul and electrified it; they did more; they communicated the virtues of the object worshipped. The adorer of Minerva wished to be prudent; courage was in the heart of the man at the altar of Mars.' All heathen idols personified some active virtue; Christianity on the contrary merely passive ones. Theism is equally useless, both philosophically and ethically; atheism alone is suitable.

All leaders of religion made their gods a tool for their secular advancement; and there is only one step from superstition to royalism. Always one of the first of the king's oaths at his coronation is the maintenance of the religion in vogue, as one of the strongest political bases of the throne. Religion and liberty are incompatible.

'Let us stop thinking religion can be of any use to men. Have good laws, and you can do without religion. But the people want one, you say; it amuses them and keeps them quiet. Very well! Then give us one suitable to free men . . . but not Christianity, which we will relegate to the perpetual neglect from which the infamous Robespierre wished to drag it. . . . Let us treat the idols as we have treated the kings; we have placed the symbols of liberty on the pedestals which formerly held kings; similarly let us place the effigies of great men (whose reputations are long established) on those formerly occupied by saints.' It is a mistake to think the peasants will resist. Place statues of Mars, Minerva, Liberty in conspicuous places, and hold festivals annually in which prizes will be given to those who have served their country best. In that way at least some virtues will be produced by religion.

There is no need for such a revolution to be other than bloodless; 'Believe me, the people are far more sensible than you think and will shake off the chains of superstition as easily as those of tyranny. You fear them without this restraint; how absurd! A person who is not restrained by the material sword of the law will not be by the moral fear of hell's tortures. . . . Perhaps people will say the time is not ripe to consolidate our revolution in so striking a fashion. Ah! my fellow

citizens, the road that we have travelled since 'eighty-nine was far harder than that which remains in front of us. . . .

'Frenchmen, if you strike the first blow, your national education will do the rest; but start work at once on this task; let it become your chiefest care; above all base it on that essential morality which religious education so neglected. Replace theistic follies by excellent social precepts; instead of learning to recite useless prayers, which they will make a point of forgetting as soon as they are sixteen, teach your children their duties to society; teach them to cherish those virtues of which you barely spoke before, and which suffice for their individual happiness without your religious fables; make them realize that happiness consists in making others as fortunate as we wish to be ourselves. If you found these truths on the chimeras of Christianity, as you had the stupidity to do before, as soon as your pupils realize the futility of the bases, they will pull down the whole edifice and will become criminals, simply because they believe that the religion which they have rejected forbade them to do so. On the contrary, if you make them realize the necessity of virtue, because their own happiness depends upon it, they will be honest people by egoism. . . . A simple philosopher should instruct these new pupils in the incomprehensible sublimities of Nature' and teach them what is known of science and biology, and show that religion is founded on ignorance and fear. By these means you will produce good soldiers, good fathers and good husbands; you will make the men the more attached to their country because no idea of subservience will enter into their heads. Then true patriotism will flower in every heart; 'it will reign in all its force and all its purity because it will be the only dominant sentiment, and no other idea will modify its energy; then your second generation is safe, and your work, consolidated by it, will become the law of the universe.

'But if by fear or cowardice these counsels are not followed and you leave in existence the foundations of the building you thought to destroy, what will happen? These foundations will be rebuilt on again and the same collossi will be replaced, but with the cruel difference that they will be cemented this time so strongly that neither your generation nor those that will follow you will be able to overthrow them. . . .

'At the same time I do not propose massacres or expulsions; such horrors are too far from my mind for me to think of conceiving them a second. No, do not assassinate or exile; these atrocities belong to kings and the criminals who imitate them; it is not by acting as they do that you will bring them in abhorrence. Let us reserve our violence for the idols; we only want ridicule for those that serve them; the sarcasm of Julian did more to destroy Christianity than all the tortures of Nero. Let us destroy all idea of God and turn our priests into soldiers; some are already and let them stay in a profession which is so noble for a republican; but don't let them speak to us any more either of their God or his religion.

'Let us condemn whoever first mentions these subjects to be mocked at, made fun of, and covered with mud in the market place; eternal prison will be the lot of him who commits twice the same fault. . . . In six months it will all be over, your infamous God will have disappeared, and that without ceasing to be just and jealous of the esteem of others, without ceasing to fear the sword of the law and to be honourable men, because we will have realized that the true friend of his country should not, like the slave of kings, be led by phantoms; because in a word it is neither the frivolous hope of a better world nor the fear of greater evils than those that Nature sends us which should lead a republican, whose sole guide is virtue and only restraint remorse.'

Morals

'After having shown that theism is completely unsuitable to a republican government, it appears to me necessary to prove that the present morals of France are equally unsuitable. This is the more essential as it is the morals which will serve as motives for the laws which are going to be promulgated.

'Frenchmen, you are too enlightened not to feel that a new government calls for new morals; it is impossible for a citizen of a free State to act in the same way as the servant of a despot; the differences of interests, duties and mutual relations necessarily demand a quite different line of conduct; a crowd of little errors, of little social crimes which were considered extremely essential under the government of kings, who had to make ever more and impose ever new restraints to make themselves respected and unapproachable by their subjects, will not exist now; other crimes, such as regicide and sacrilege, should equally disappear in a republic which no longer recognizes kings or religion. In addition to liberty of the conscience and liberty of the Press, citizens, one should accord with few exceptions, liberty of action, and except for crimes which disturb directly the bases of the State, there are practically no crimes for you to punish in a State founded on liberty and equality; for under thorough examination it appears that only that is criminal which the law reproves; for since nature dictates to us equally vices and virtues, according to our organization . . . her inspiration would become a certain rule for what is good or bad. To develop further my ideas on such an essential subject, I am going to classify the different actions in man's life which up till now have been called criminal, and measure them against the true duties of a republican.

'At all times man's duties have been divided into three classes - towards God, towards his neighbour and towards himself.'

The first series of crimes - towards God - obviously have no more existence. 'If there is one thing more extravagant than another in this world it is to see men who only know their God and what he demands by their limited ideas, try to decide on the nature of what

pleases or annoys Him. I don't want to stop at the freedom for all cults; I would like people to be free to laugh at and ridicule all of them,' and a congregation be treated like a comic spectacle. 'But don't destroy the idols in anger, break them up in play.'

The second class is the duty of man towards his neighbour and is the most extensive of all.

'Christian morality, far too vague about the relations of man with his fellows, uses bases so full of sophistry that it is impossible to admit them, for if one wants to erect principles, great care must be taken not to found them on sophistries. This absurd morality tells us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Nothing could be more sublime, were it possible that what is false can be beautiful. It is impossible to love our neighbours as ourselves, for it is against all the laws of Nature and her organ alone should direct us; we can only love our neighbours as good friends whom Nature gives us, and with whom we should live more easily in a republican State, since the disappearance of distances must necessarily draw the links closer.

'Therefore let humanity, fraternity and kindness prescribe for us our reciprocal duties, and let us each fulfil them with all the energy that Nature has given us on this point, without blaming and above all without punishing those whose colder or more atrabilious temperaments do not find in these bonds, which are yet so touching, all the pleasures which others discover in them; for it will be agreed that it would be absurd to prescribe universal laws; it would be as ridiculous as a general who would order uniforms of the same measure for the whole army; it would be a terrible injustice to demand that men, whose characters are different, should obey the same laws; what suits one does not suit another.

'I agree that we cannot make as many laws as there are men; but the laws can be so clement and so few that all men whatever their character can comply with them. I would also demand that this small number of laws be of a sort that could adapt themselves to all different characters; the directing spirit would be to punish more or less according to the character of the person in question. It has been shown that there are some virtues whose practice is impossible to certain men, as there are some remedies which are intolerable to certain physiques. Would it not be the height of injustice if you make the law strike a man when he cannot possibly obey it; it would be like forcing a blind man to distinguish colour.

'From these first principles results the necessity to make clement laws, and above all to do away for ever with the death penalty, for a law which attacks man's life is impracticable, unjust, inadmissible.' As will be shown later, there are cases when men may be justified in attempting another's life, but the law cannot be, for it is passionless, and 'passion is the only excuse which can legitimize the cruel action of murder; man receives from Nature impressions which may make such an action pardonable, but the law on the contrary is always in opposition with Nature and receives nothing from her; since it has

not the same motives it cannot have the same rights. . . . The second reason for doing away with the death penalty is that it has never repressed crime, since it is committed daily at the foot of the scaffold.

'In a word, this penalty should be suppressed because there is no calculation more stupid than that of killing one man for having killed another, since obviously instead of one man the less you have two; and it is only executioners and fools who can be happy with such arithmetic.'

The crimes which can be committed against our neighbour fall into four categories – *Calumny*, *theft*, acts of *impurity* which can cause distress to others and *murder*.

'All these actions were considered as capital offences under a monarchical government, but are they equally grave in a republic? That is what we intend to analyse by the light of philosophy – the only way in which such an examination should be conducted. Do not tax me with being a dangerous innovator; do not say that there is a risk of lightening, as perhaps these writings may do, the remorse in the malefactor's heart, or that there is a greater evil in increasing, by the mildness of my system, the inclination these same malefactors have for their crimes; I here protest formally that I have no such perverse views; I am exposing those ideas which have been identified with me since I reached the age of reason, and against whose diffusion the infamous despotism of tyrants was directed for so many ages; so much the worse for those whom these great ideas would corrupt; so much the worse for those who can only catch hold of the evil in philosophical opinions and who are susceptible to corruption from everything; Who knows if they wouldn't be tainted by reading *Seneca* or *Charron*! It is not those whom I speak to; I only address myself to people capable of understanding me, and such can read me without danger.

'I confess quite frankly that I have never thought *calumny* an evil. . . . Either the calumny falls on a wicked or a good man. In the former case a useful service has been done; in the latter it will encourage the good man to further efforts, so that he can throw off the unwarranted opprobrium. It is therefore not to be considered as a crime.

'*Theft* is the second fault to be considered. If we examine anti-quity we will see that theft was allowed in many republics, like Sparta. . . .; some other people regarded it as a martial virtue; it is certain that it encourages strength, courage and address, all virtues useful to a republic. I will make bold to ask impartially if theft, whose effect is to equalize riches, is a great evil in a government whose aim is equality? Undoubtedly no, for if it tends to equality on either side, it makes the possessor more careful in guarding his goods. There was a people who used to punish, not the robber, but he who let himself be robbed, in order to teach him to take care of his property. This leads us to wider reflections.

'God forbid that I should wish to attack or destroy here the oath

for the respect of property which the nation has just pronounced; but may I be allowed some remarks on the injustice of this oath? What is the spirit of an oath pronounced by all the members of a nation? Is it not to maintain complete equality among citizens, to submit them all equally to a law which protects the property of all? Then I ask you if it is a just law which orders him who has nothing to respect him who has everything? What are the elements of a social pact? Doesn't it consist in abandoning a little of one's freedom and property to assure and maintain the preservation of both?

'All laws are based on this supposition; it is the motive of the punishments inflicted on him who abuses his liberty; also it authorizes taxes; and the reason why a citizen doesn't complain when he receives demands is because he realizes that by means of what he gives he preserves the remainder; but once again by what right will he who has nothing bind himself to a pact which only protects him who has everything? If you are acting justly by preserving with your oath the properties of the rich, are you not acting unjustly in exacting this oath from the preserver who has nothing? What interest has he in this oath of yours? and on what grounds do you demand that he promise a thing which is uniquely favourable to the man who by his riches is so different from him? Assuredly nothing could be more unjust; an oath should have an equal effect on all who subscribe to it; it cannot possibly bind a man who has no interest in its maintenance, because it would then no longer be the pact of a free people; it would be an arm for the strong against the weak, against which the latter should revolt continually; the rich alone enslaves the poor, the rich alone has an interest in the oath the poor pronounces with so little consideration, that he does not see that by means of this oath, extracted through his good faith, he binds himself to do a thing which cannot be done for him in turn.

'If you are convinced, as you ought to be, of this barbarous inequality, do not aggravate your injustice by punishing him who has nothing for having dared take something from him who has everything; your unfair oath gives him more right than ever. When you forced him to perjury by this oath, which is absurd for him, you legitimize all the crimes this perjury leads to; therefore you have no right to punish that which you have caused. I will not insist further in trying to make the horrible cruelty of punishing thieves felt. Imitate that wise law of which I spoke and punish the man who is careless enough to let himself be robbed, not the robber; consider that he is authorized by your oath, and that by so acting he is merely following the first of Nature's laws - that of self-preservation, no matter at whose expense.

'The next class of crime that we have to examine consists of actions motivated by lust, especially those which can harm others - *prostitution, adultery, incest, rape and sodomy*. It is indisputable that all that are called moral crimes, of the sort we have just named, are completely indifferent to a government whose sole duty is to

preserve by any means possible its essential form. That should be the unique morality of a republican government. But since it is always being attacked by the despotic governments which surround it, one can hardly reasonably suppose that its methods of preservation would be *moral methods*; for it can only preserve itself by war, and nothing is less moral than war.

'Now I ask how it can be shown that in a State which is *immoral* by obligation it is essential that the individuals should be *moral*? I go further and say that it is good that they should not be. The legislators of ancient Greece felt completely the important necessity of keeping the members corrupt, so that their *moral dissolution* should be reflected in the dissolution useful to government, and thereby should result that spirit of insurrection which is always indispensable to a republican government, which, since it is completely happy, must necessarily excite the hatred and jealousy of countries surrounding it. These wise legislators considered that insurrection was not a *moral* state; therefore it would be as absurd as it would be dangerous to demand that those who must maintain the perpetual *immoral* movement of the machine of State should themselves be very *moral*, because the moral state in man is one of peace and tranquillity, whereas his *immoral* state is one of continuous motion, which brings him near the insurrection always necessary to the government of the republic of which he is a member.

'Let us now examine in further detail and start with modesty.' Modesty is unnatural and local, founded on the inclemency of the climate and coquetry. 'Lycurgus and Solon, convinced that the results of immodesty keep the citizen in the state of *immorality* essential to a republic, forced young girls to appear naked in the theatres. Rome imitated this example with the games of Flora; most pagan mysteries were performed in this state; nudity even passed for a virtue among some nations. Be that as it may, from immodesty come lecherous impulses; the results of these impulses compose the so-called crimes which we are analysing, of which the first is *prostitution*. Now that we have recovered on this subject from the crowd of religious errors which held us captive, and that, nearer to nature on account of the quantity of prejudices we have annihilated, we only listen to her voice, in the assurance that if there was a crime in anything it would be rather in resisting the inclinations that she inspires than in following them; and since we realize that lechery is a result of these inclinations it is less a question of repressing this passion in ourselves than in regulating the means by which it can be satisfied in peace. Therefore we should devote ourselves to the task of regulating this subject and to establish all the necessary safety, so that the citizen whom need unites with the objects of his lust can give himself over with these objects to all that his passions demand, without being inhibited by anything, because no human passion has more need of the fullest possible extension of liberty than this one. Various buildings, healthy, large, properly furnished and com-

pletely safe shall be erected in all towns; there, every sex, every age, every creature will be offered to the caprices of the libertines who will come to take their pleasure, and the most complete subordination will be the rule for the people present; the slightest refusal will be punished arbitrarily by him who has suffered from it. I must again explain here, and measure this against republican morals; I have promised to be equally logical everywhere and I will keep my word.

'If, as has been said, no passion has need of such a great extension of liberty as this one, no other is so despotic; it is then that man wishes to command, to be obeyed, to surround himself with slaves bound to satisfy him; well, whenever you deprive man of this secret means of getting rid of the measure of despotism Nature has placed at the bottom of his heart, in order to exercise it he will fall back on the objects which surround him and disturb the government. If you wish to avoid this danger, give free play to these tyrannous desires, which despite himself torment him ceaselessly; contented with the exercise of his petty sovereignty in the midst of his harem of male and female paramours . . . he will come out satisfied, and without any wish to disturb the government. . . .

'See how the Greek legislators, penetrated by these ideas, treated debauchery in Athens and Sparta; they drugged the citizen with it, far from forbidding it; no sort was outlawed, and *Socrates*, whom the oracle declared to be the wisest man on earth, passed indifferently from the arms of *Aspasia* to those of *Alcibiades*, and was no less the glory of Greece. I will go further, and however contrary my ideas may be to current customs, since my object is to prove that we must hurry to change these customs if we wish to keep the form of government we have adopted, I will try to prove that the prostitution of women known as honest is no more dangerous than that of men, and that not only should they take part in the debaucheries exercised in the buildings I establish, but that such buildings should also be erected for them, where their caprices and the needs of their temperament, far more ardent than ours, can equally be satisfied in every way

'First of all by what right do you claim that women should be excepted from the blind submission, which Nature prescribed to them, to man's caprices, and secondly by what other right do you pretend to enforce on them a continence which is impossible to their constitution and useless to their honour?'

In nature, women were 'vulguivagues', that is, belonging to all the males, like other female animals; interest, egoism and love modified this; people thought they were enriching themselves by taking a woman and the goods of her family. But 'no act of possession can ever be exercised on a free person; it is as unjust to possess a woman exclusively as it is to possess slaves; all humans are born free and with equal rights; let us never forget that; consequently no sex can have a legitimate right to the exclusive possession of another,

and no sex or class can possess the other exclusively. Therefore a woman . . . would have no right in refusing . . . by saying she was in love . . . as that would be exclusion. . . .

'If, then, it is incontestable that we have the natural right to express our desires to every woman, we have equally that of forcing them to submit to our desires, not exclusively, that would be a contradiction, but momentarily. (I do not contradict myself; I am talking of enjoyment, not of possession; I have no right to the possession of the stream that I come to on my road, but I have to its enjoyment.) . . .

Modesty, or the attachment to another man, would be no motive for a woman's refusal. Love, which can be called *madness of the soul*, is equally inadmissible because it is selfish and exclusive. Under the system established any man could summon any girl or woman to appear in one of the houses mentioned, and there, under the safeguard of the matrons, she must satisfy with the most complete humility and submission all the caprices the man desires, no matter of what sort. Age limits are fixed by the limits of desire.

Women will have exactly the same rights as men; 'it is absurd to have placed their honour and their virtue in the anti-natural strength with which they resist their inclinations which are far stronger than ours; this moral injustice is the more scandalous since we consent to make them weak by seduction and then punish them because they have yielded to all the efforts we have made to encompass their fall. The whole absurdity of our morals, it seems to me, is founded on this iniquitous atrocity, and this simple exposition should make us realize the extreme necessity that we are in to change them for purer ones.'

Consequently women will have exactly the same licence as men. The only possible danger in this is fatherless children; but what does that matter to a republic where every individual should have no other mother than his country, when all who are born are children of the fatherland. 'How much more will those love it, who never having known any but it will know from birth that it is from their country alone that they must expect everything! Do not think that you can make good republicans as long as you isolate children in their families - children who should belong only to the republic. In the family they give to a few individuals the love that they should divide among all their brothers, and adopt the often dangerous prejudices of these individuals; their opinions and ideas become isolated and all the virtues of a statesman become impossible for them. They give all their affection to those who have borne them and none to those who make them live, make them known and make them illustrious, as if these second benefits were not far stronger than the first'; since therefore family interests are opposed to those of the state it is to the advantage of the republic that the family be destroyed and children belong entirely to the fatherland.

Since women will have the same licence as men and will be en-

couraged to use it as and when they desire, openly and without shame, the question of *adultery* hardly arises. It is an added barbarity in our ancestors that they regarded a woman's infidelity as a crime; indissoluble unions are intolerable for both parties, but particularly for women. Thomas More and the habits of the Tartars and the Peruvians are quoted to show that debauchery in a woman is neither undesirable nor criminal.

Similarly *incest* is of no importance and is general in some parts of the world. *Rape* would appear to be the form of lechery which is most harmful, 'nevertheless, it is certain that rape - an action which is so rare and so difficult to prove - does less harm than theft, since one deprives a person of property and the other merely deteriorates it. Anyhow what can you object to the rapist if he replies that he has done very little harm, since he has merely placed the object which he has abused a little earlier in the condition which love and marriage would soon reduce her to?

'But what of *sodomy*, that so-called crime, which called down the fire of heaven on the towns which practised it, is it not a monstrous act for which the punishment cannot be strong enough? It is terribly painful for us to have to reproach our ancestors with the judicial murders they committed on this subject. Is it possible to be so barbarous as to dare to condemn an unfortunate whose crime consists in not having the same tastes as ourselves? We shudder when we think that less than forty years ago the absurdity of our legislators was still at that point. Console yourselves, citizens, such absurdities will take place no longer; the wisdom of your legislators answers for that. Completely enlightened on this weakness of some men, we realize today that such an error cannot be criminal, and that Nature does not attach enough importance to the fluid in our loins to be enraged at the route we make this fluid take.

'What is the only crime which can exist here? Surely not placing oneself in such or such a position, unless you wish to hold that some parts of the body are different from others, that some are pure and others impure, but as it is impossible to advance such absurdities the only possible crime can be in the waste of semen. But I ask you is it probable that that semen is so precious in the eyes of Nature that it cannot be wasted without crime?' Obviously not. It is completely indifferent how or with whom pleasure is taken, since all inclinations are natural. Sodomy is usually caused by organization, occasionally by satiety; in either case it is indifferent. It is more common in republics, and useful for them, as is proved by the examples and writings of the Romans and Greeks. It is a habit which is found all over the world and various quotations show that it was encouraged for the martial and civic virtues it produces. It is therefore completely indifferent to a republic, as are all other and obscurer vices.

'Only *murder* remains to be examined in the second class of crimes. Of all the wrongs that man can do to his fellows, murder is undoubtedly the cruellest of all, since it deprives him of the only gift

he has received from Nature and the only one whose loss is irreparable. Nevertheless several questions present themselves here, apart from the wrong that murder causes to its victim.

1. Is this action really criminal in the pure laws of Nature?
2. Is it politically criminal?
3. Is it harmful to society?
4. How should it be considered by a republican government?
5. Should murder be suppressed by murder?

'We will examine separately each of these questions; the subject is sufficiently important to warrant prolonged attention. Maybe our ideas will be considered somewhat strong; but what of it? Have we not acquired the right to say everything? Let us develop these great truths in men's eyes; they expect them from us; it is time for error to disappear, its bandage must fall with that of the king.

'The first question was: Is murder a crime in the eyes of Nature? Doubtless we will humiliate man's pride in reducing him to the ranks of the other productions of Nature,' but nevertheless he is merely an animal like any other, and in the eyes of Nature his death is no more important than that of a fly or an ox. And, anyhow, death is not final, but merely a transmutation to some other form of life, man into worm. Destruction is Nature's method of progress, and she prompts the murderer to destruction, so that his action shall be the same as plague or famine.

'Is murder a crime politically? Let us confess on the contrary that it is unfortunately one of the principal springs of politics. Did not Rome become mistress of the world by force of murder? Is it not by force of murder that France is free today? It is unnecessary to warn the reader here that we are speaking of murders caused by *war* and not the atrocities committed by insurrectionaries and counter-revolutionaries; these latter, vowed to public execration, only need to be remembered to excite eternally the horror and indignation of all. What human profession has more need of support by murder than politics, which tends ceaselessly to deceive, and whose only aim is the growth of one nation at the expense of another? Are the iniquitous wars, the fruits of these barbarous policies, other than the means by which the nation is nourished, fortifies and extends itself? And what is war except the science of destruction? The strange folly of man who teaches publicly the art of murder and honours him who succeeds the best therein, and then punishes the man who for a private quarrel gets rid of the enemy! Is it not time to turn back on such barbarous paradoxes?

'Is murder a crime against society?' Obviously one or two members more or less are indifferent to it, otherwise would society engage in battle?

'How should murder be considered in a republican and warlike State? It would assuredly be extremely dangerous to cast obloquy on this action or to punish it. Republican pride demands a certain

amount of ferocity; if it softens there is a loss of energy and subjugation will quickly follow. A very strange reflection presents itself here, but as it is true in spite of its strangeness I will say it. A nation which starts as a republic will only be upheld by virtues, because to arrive at the greater one must always start by the less; but a nation which is already old and corrupt and will have the courage to shake off the monarchical yoke to adopt the republican will only maintain itself by many crimes; for it is already criminal, and if it tried to pass from crime to virtue, that is to say from a violent to a calm state, it would fall into inertia with its inevitable ruin as the result.'

Murder is permitted or encouraged in many States and at many different times. In the classical republics the murder of slaves was not taken notice of. Among many savages murder is considered an act of bravery, and men are not admitted to full rank before they have committed one or more murders. There were also human sacrifices and men running amuck in many nations. A number of nations today tolerate open murder. 'What nation was greater or more cruel than Rome, and what nation preserved longer its freedom and its liberty? The spectacle of gladiators kept up its courage; it became warlike by the habit of turning murder into a sport. Twelve or fifteen hundred victims filled the arena daily, and there the women, far more cruel than the men, demanded that the dying should fall gracefully and that they should be statuesque even in the convulsions of death.

'Everywhere in fact it was rightly believed that a murderer, that is to say a man who could smother his sensibility sufficiently to kill his fellow and brave public or private vengeance, must be extremely courageous and consequently precious in a warlike or republican government. Let us now examine the nations, even more ferocious, who indulged in infanticide; we shall see such a course universally adopted and even sometimes enjoined by law.' See for example the American Indians or the Madagascans. 'In the republics of Greece all children were carefully examined at birth and if they were malformed, so that they could never defend the republic, they were immediately destroyed; there they did not think it necessary to erect richly endowed asylums to preserve that vile scum of the human race. Until the capital was changed, Romans who could not feed their children exposed them. The ancient legislators had no scruple on this account, and none of their codes suppressed it. Aristotle advised abortion and these old republicans, full of enthusiasm and love for their country, did not recognize that individual commiseration one finds in modern nations; people loved their children less, their country more. In all the towns of China an enormous number of abandoned children are found daily in the streets.

'It cannot be denied that it is extremely necessary and politic to put a limit to the population in a republic; the exact opposite is the case in a monarchy; there tyrants measured their wealth by the

number of their slaves and consequently needed men; but an excess of population is undoubtedly a real vice in a republic; nevertheless one shouldn't cut throats to lessen it as our modern decemvirs said; it is merely a question of not allowing it to exceed the limits prescribed by its happiness. Take care not to multiply too much a people in which each individual is sovereign; revolutions are always the effect of too big a population. If for the glory of the State you allow your warriors the right to destroy their fellows, for the preservation of the State, you should allow everybody to get rid of children they cannot nourish or who cannot be useful; and also grant the citizen the right to get rid of, at his own risks and peril, all enemies who harm him. . . . Let monarchists say that a State is great in relation to its population; a State will always be poor if the population exceeds its supplies necessary for life, and will always be prosperous if it is kept to the right level and can sell its excess . . . but you should not destroy grown men to diminish the population. It is unjust to shorten the days of a properly developed individual; birth control on the contrary is not. . . .

'It is time to resume. Should murder be punished by murder? Undoubtedly not. The only punishment which a murderer should be condemned to is that which he risks from the friends or the family of the man he has killed. *I pardon you*, said Louis XV to Charolais,* who had just killed a man for his own amusement, *but I also pardon him who will kill you*. All the bases of the law against murderers is contained in that sublime sentence. (Salic law punished murder with a fine.)

'In a word murder is a horror, but a horror often necessary, never criminal, and essential to tolerate in a republic.' Above all it should never be punished by murder.

As far as man's duties towards himself are concerned, the philosopher will only follow them as far as they affect his pleasure or his self-preservation; consequently it is useless to recommend their practice to him, and even more so to punish him for not following them. The only action which has been blamed in this category is suicide, which it is idiotic to call a crime.

'The long-established habit of supporting despotism had completely enervated our courage; our morals had been depraved but we are born again; soon people will see of what sublime actions the genius and character of the French are capable, now they are free; let us uphold at the price of our fortunes and our lives that liberty which has already cost us so many victims; we will not regret any

* Charolais, prince of the blood by his birth and by his tastes, is the real 'sadist' of the eighteenth century, and many of the legends which surround de Sade would be more properly applied to this man who, as Michelet says, 'n'aimait le beau sexe qu'à l'état sanglant'. The stories concerning him are extremely unpleasant and he almost certainly served de Sade as a model in his extant works, as well as in the lost *Journées de Florbelle*, in which he appeared under his own name.

of them if we reach our aim; they sacrificed themselves voluntarily; do not let their blood be uselessly spilt; but we must stand united . . . united, or the fruits of our efforts are lost; let us erect excellent laws on the victories we have just gained; our first legislators, still slaves of the tyrant we have finally thrown down, only gave us laws worthy of the tyrant they still revered; let us redo their task, let us think that it is for republicans that we are working; let our laws be as mild as the people they are to sway.

'In demonstrating as I have done the nullity and indifference of a multitude of actions which our ancestors, biased by a false religion, regarded as crimes, I have reduced our work to very little. Let us have few laws, but good ones - it is not a question of multiplying restraints, but merely giving to those we do use the quality of indestructibility - and see that the laws that we do make aim only at the peace and happiness of the citizen and the glory of the republic; but once you have chased the enemy from your country, Frenchmen, I would not wish that the ardour of your principles should carry you further; you can only carry them to the ends of the world with fire and the sword. Before you try to do this, remember the unhappy result of the Crusades. Once the enemy is the other side of the Rhine, fortify your frontiers and stay at home; revive your trade, give your manufactures energy and markets; help the arts to flourish again, and encourage agriculture which is so important in a government like yours; your object should be to be able to sell to all the world without having need of anybody. Let the thrones of Europe fall down of their own accord; your example and your prosperity will soon overturn them without the necessity of your interference.

'Invincible in the interior and a model to all people by your police and your good laws, every government in the world will try to imitate you and will be honoured by alliance with you; but if for the vain honour of carrying your principles afar you abandon the care of your own prosperity, that despotism which is merely asleep will reawaken, internal dissensions will rend you, you will exhaust your finances and your army; and all that so that on your return you can kiss the chains that tyrants who will have conquered you in your absence will load you with; all that you want can be done without leaving your homes; let other nations see you happy and they will hurry to seek prosperity by the route that you have traced for them.'⁶

This pamphlet was reprinted separately and anonymously as propaganda for the Commune in 1848.

I have thought it best to present de Sade's constructive political thought over the fateful years 1788-95 without comment, in historical order, and as much as possible in de Sade's own words, so that readers could observe for themselves the development through the thesis of political equality and subordination to the State (Sections I and II) and the antithesis of complete individual freedom

(Section III) to the synthesis of the practical programme of the last Section.

As a revolutionary thinker de Sade was in complete opposition to all his contemporaries, firstly in his complete and continual denial of a right to property, and secondly in his view of the struggle as being – not between the Crown, the bourgeoisie, the aristocracy or the clergy, or sectional interests of any of these against one another (the view of all his contemporaries) – but of all these more or less united against the people. By holding these views he cuts himself off entirely from the revolutionary thinkers of his time to join those of the mid-nineteenth century. For this reason he can with some justice be called the first reasoned socialist. In his attempt to conciliate the conflicting demands of the individual with political fairness for all he stands alone, despite Kropotkin and the anarchists.

Writers about de Sade invariably reproach him for the mild way in which he conducted himself during the Revolution and call him merely a parlour revolutionary. Apparently they expected this man of over fifty to indulge in the torture and rapine that legend has associated with his name; they would not understand that a person who could analyse so clearly the brutality of others should find such brutality disgusting and abhorrent. As a matter of fact de Sade did all that was humanly possible in the way of speaking and writing to persuade his fellow-citizens to follow him in his well-developed plans; but he spoke a language which none then, and too few now, can understand.

It was inevitable that he should be merely a theoretical and Utopian socialist. But as a theoretical socialist he saw extraordinarily justly, as can be seen by his prophetic deductions concerning the immediate future of France, and also his extremely apt criticism of the League of Nations and the United Nations which another century would realize with all the inherent faults he detected.

Ethically de Sade was more revolutionary still in his attempt to effect a complete cleavage with Judeo-Christian morality and its conception of human nature. Here, too, we are slowly catching up with him; of the proposals that were so paradoxical in 1795 I imagine that only two are profoundly shocking today – the justification of murder, and the concept of universal brothels and general promiscuity.

The justification of murder comes from the fact that de Sade was a logician and not a casuist. Foreign counter-revolutionaries were on French soil and must be driven off, if the Republic were to live. But murder is taking life, no matter what the circumstances or excuse. Therefore murder must always be justifiable, for all citizens are equal on all occasions. His logic of course becomes paradoxical as logic pushed to extremes always does.

His plan for universal brothels and promiscuity is not mere paradoxical perversity but is a considered solution for the problems which arise from his view of sex and allied instincts, a view

which will be examined in the following chapters. Meanwhile there is one point I should like to remark on.

The arguments that de Sade advances (see especially pages 133-36) that the citizens of a true republic, or what would be called now a real democracy, must needs be sexually immoral seemed when I first noticed them to be paradoxical and perverse, logical *non sequiturs*. But the history of the last twenty years would seem to justify him. Despite its encouragement of illegitimate children, the legislation of Nazi Germany was extremely puritanical with continual emphasis on sexual and racial purity; and the charge of sexual misdemeanours was regularly raised against people whom it was desired to discredit. No country is more prudish today, both in its legislation and public behaviour, than the U.S.S.R.; all the liberal concessions which were made in the first years of the revolution have been withdrawn; homosexuality, abortion, common law concubinage and frequent divorce are all penalized; the regulation of sexual behaviour is more savage than it ever was under the Czars.

It is improbable that the late George Orwell consciously remembered this passage (I know he read it when it first came out) when he invented the Junior Anti-Sex League for all the girls in *Nineteen Eighty-four*; arguing on quite different lines and from quite different evidence he reached similar conclusions to de Sade on the political implications of sexual freedom and restraint.

Sex, Pleasure and Love

Children of the future age,
Reading this indignant page
Know that in a former time
Love, sweet love, was thought a crime!

— W. BLAKE

Songs of Experience

Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joy's in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.

— W. BLAKE

Songs of Experience

Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted
desires.

— W. BLAKE

Marriage of Heaven and Hell

I

IN the hundred years during which sexual behaviour has been considered a suitable subject for scientific inquiry, the study has gone through three phases. First was the listing and classification of perversions and deviations, with which the names of such sexologists as Krafft-Ebing or Havelock Ellis are particularly connected. Second came the elaborate investigation of the motives, conscious and unconscious, and the etiology of behaviour deemed neurotic or perverse, with which the names of Freud and his followers are particularly connected. Both these phases, with their chief exponents coming from Central Europe, assumed that everybody knew what sexual 'normality' was, and that such 'normality' would be universally achieved save for deplorable accidents of physiology or reprehensible mistreatment by parents and guardians. The third phase, which is so far almost entirely an American phase, is particularly concerned with the problem of statistical normality, of the average of sexual behaviour. This preoccupation with norms is congruent with much other American behaviour, with self-rating and the American interpretation of democracy, with the belief that the unusual is likely to be abnormal, and that conduct becomes justified if it can be shown to be widely shared. The most notorious of

these statistical sexologists is the taxonomic entomologist Alfred Kinsey; but there have been a number of other investigations with less attendant publicity.

In some ways de Sade can be considered an ancestor to all three lines of research, though his most obvious connection is with the cataloguers of sexual variations, who repeated laboriously the pioneer work of which they were ignorant. As will be pointed out in more detail below, there are many points of contact between de Sade's ideas and Freud's discoveries; and de Sade, who was in touch with his own unconscious to an extent that is almost unparalleled among prose writers, would without question have welcomed the concepts of the unconscious and the *id*. De Sade would probably have had least sympathy with the taxonomic work of Kinsey and his ilk. De Sade was almost the first to raise the question of what was sexual normality, and he would think the study of this question an important one, I imagine; but he would almost certainly have rejected the very restricted definition of sexual behaviour with which Kinsey operates; the activities with which he is occupied are what de Sade describes as 'puerilities' which everybody knows about; it is the secret desires and fantasies, the private manias and rituals, the accompaniments and the details whose variations would be worth study. Kinsey's man-in-the-street performs somewhat more varied sexual activities than the Puritan ideal of the man-in-the-church; but his activities are simple, monotonous and restricted compared with de Sade's image of the man-in-the-bed.

De Sade wrote alone, mostly in prison, inspired like an infernal prophet, without any suspicion that the subjects he was dragging from the darkest pit would ever be respectable objects of study; inevitably he wrote as a 'philosophical novelist,' for the period offered no other model for the study of human behaviour; and he used the current vocabulary of short words, the equivalent of 'Anglo-Saxon monosyllables.' It is this vocabulary which separates de Sade from his nineteenth-century successors; they invented for the discussion of sexual matters an aseptic polysyllabic vocabulary of Greco-Latin neologisms, completely free from associations of any sort. From that time onward scientists were able to describe and talk about sexual matters in terms which showed clearly enough that the subject could have no possible contact with either the writer or his readers.

Despite the asepsis of the professors, sex does still play a part in our lives, and the scientific aura they have given to these unscientific manifestations of vitality has produced a complete distortion of human life. They aver that we are brought into the world by 'copulation,' but surely nobody thinks of himself as 'copulating,' not even the most astringent scientist - unless maybe Christian Scientists do.

The late D. H. Lawrence felt this contradiction so strongly that he risked his established reputation to employ four out of the six

tabooed words. (Incidentally the two words he did not use will tell the perspicacious more about this writer than the deluge of volumes since his death.) Like de Sade, he felt that "sex" is as important as eating or drinking and we ought to allow the one appetite to be satisfied with as little restraint or false modesty as the other.¹

De Sade was fully conscious of the choice of vocabularies before him – the choice between the poetic circumlocution and the crude monosyllables – and consciously chose the latter. "... This isn't an indecent anecdote . . . but a part of human history which we are going to learn, and the developments of morals; if you wish to learn from it you must be exact, which things swathed in gauze never are. Dirty minds are offended at everything. . . . Obscenity may revolt, disgust and instruct, but does not excite . . ."²

II

DE SADE gives such an extension to the idea of sex that it becomes practically synonymous with the idea of pleasure, and sex at times means simply the stimulus of agreeable sensation; all physical and most mental sensations of a positive nature are grouped under this term. That all physical sensations should be so qualified is a fairly obvious notion; the extension to the imagination and the intellect was a further step which was unheard of when he made his investigations, but is now also generally accepted. He considered the pursuit of pleasure to be the object of human life, and thought that physical satisfaction was stronger than mental;³ consequently 'it is only by enlarging the scope of one's tastes and one's fantasies, by sacrificing everything to pleasure, that that unfortunate individual called man, thrown despite himself into this sad world, can succeed in gathering a few roses among life's thorns.'⁴ He was the first to formulate the now generally accepted conception of the overwhelming importance of sex. 'Lust is to the other passions what the nervous fluid is to life; it supports them all, lends strength to them all . . . ambition, cruelty, avarice, revenge, are all founded on lust.'⁵

According to de Sade, very young children are shameless, sexually inquisitive and endowed with strong sexual feelings.⁶ Children are naturally polymorphous pervers. 'Everyone is born with dispositions more or less great for perversions and all are more or less differently constituted; and love, which comes after these first received impressions bends them to its service, corresponding to their activity. If the impressions are weak, love, which is fostered by them, becomes stronger than they and is sweet and reasonable; if on the contrary they are strong, passion like a whirlwind . . . breaks, tears and devours all that opposes it; it becomes a fiery flame which burns all that it meets, and finds only further fuel in all that is presented to stifle it. All these are the results of love; the naughty

child breaks its toy; he has pleasure in smashing it to bits and soon weeps bitter tears on the ruins his temper has made. Such is love and its effects; such are its incredible extravagances, sometimes impure and sometimes cruel, but always natural . . . which the fool doesn't know about, the thick-headed puritan punishes, and the philosopher respects because he alone knows the human heart and holds the key. Other people are always being surprised at the combined effects of the heart and the instincts; and as it is extremely common for the one to be good and the other evil, when both are in action together there are often seen in the same person a number of virtues and vices mixed; people fall back on human contradiction without seeing that the results are not due to inconsequence but simply to the united effects of two necessarily different principles, with consequently different effects. Hadrian loved Antinous just as Abélard loved Héloïse; one had bad instincts, the other a good heart.⁷

De Sade also believed that deep family affections, especially when the loved member was of the opposite sex, contained deeply hidden incest desires.⁸

As far as adult sex-life was concerned, de Sade divided people into three categories. The first, and much the largest, consisted of people whose imagination, courage, or desires were weak or repressed, and therefore their lives sexually were without remarkable incident. In this connection he says that 'continence is far from being the virtue it is supposed to be; it has many dangers and no good effects; it is as harmful for men as for women; it is bad for the health. . . .'⁹ The second category consists of natural perverts, and the third of libertines who consciously imitate the obsessions of the second class to enlarge their experience. It is almost exclusively with these two categories that de Sade deals, though the first class furnishes the vile bodies with which the experiments are made. Since the habits of the third class are the same as the second – with the difference that the perversions are wilful instead of congenital – it is de Sade's investigation of that class which we must now examine.

He insists strongly that perversions are congenital and involuntary in most cases. 'What man wouldn't change his tastes at once if he could and wouldn't prefer to be like the rest of mankind instead of being peculiar if he had the power? It is the most stupid and barbarious intolerance to prosecute such a person; he is no more to blame . . . than a man who is born lame or hump-backed. It is as unjust to make fun of or to punish a man like that as it is to mock or insult a cripple. A man with strange tastes is really an invalid. . . .'¹⁰

Perversions may be divided into two groups, mental and physical; and the second group be further divided into four sub-groups, depending on whether the perversion lies in the action, the object of affection, the type of person, or the pantomime ritual performed.

To be a little clearer, a person may get pleasure from some action other than normal 'copulation', from some person, animal, or object other than a member of the opposite sex, from an exclusive type or dress (blondes, ballet dancers, sailors, parlour-maids or people dressed up to look like any of these, etc., etc.), or from the re-enacting of some fixed scene, with the partner, however often varied in fact, always playing the same rôle. The first two categories obviously overlap.

In *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* de Sade has fixed permanently almost every variety of perversion in each of these categories. How he was able to do this seems quite inexplicable, for though he had led a life of considerable and varied debauchery for at least fifteen years – to my mind he was, as a physiologist might say, 'being his own rabbit,' – it is quite impossible for any one man to have experienced personally all the often mutually contradictory perversions he lists. Both his examples and explanations show considerable similarity with those of Professor Krafft-Ebing, Mr. Havelock Ellis and other modern anthologists, though his range is far larger and more inclusive. He describes the perversions with the greatest economy and in the simplest language, so that his 'histories' lack the human interest of Ellis's and the coy Latin of Krafft-Ebing's. He tried fitfully and unsuccessfully to recapture these details in *Justine* and *Juliette* after the loss of the earlier manuscript, but with indifferent success.

Among intellectual perversions he describes, besides the more obvious classes, such as 'voyeurs' and 'exhibitionists,' many with less physical effects, such as the pleasure of moral seduction,¹¹ without the enjoyment of the result, kleptomania, which he explains as a substitute for rape^{12*} and fetishes for smells, colours, and stuffs, of a sort that one had thought known only to the editor of that strangely innocent English paper for perverts. Some of his cases have very peculiar reactions to money; one person cannot enjoy pleasure unless combined with stealing or cheating,¹³ another can enjoy only bought pleasures¹⁴ while yet a third insists on paying those he believes to be richer than himself and in robbing those he believes poorer.¹⁵

I think de Sade's description of perverse actions is absolutely complete, ranging from the pleasure of combing hair to lust-murder, through every possible gradation from the ridiculous to the revolting, from the pleasure to be got from snotty little girls to the enjoyment of the greatest ugliness, infirmity and corruption, from foot fetishism to coprophagy. Beyond calling attention to the fact that this was by almost exactly a century the first objective study of sexual phenomena, I do not think there is any need for further elaboration.

In the class of perverse objects, homosexuality is by far the

* 'If I find pleasure in rape as rape, I will find the same pleasure in stealing a watch or a pocket book. This explains the fantastic behaviour of so many well-off people who steal without feeling want.'

most conspicuous. De Sade's observations on this subject are curious. Firstly he considers natural homosexuality – as opposed to that suggested by satiety – a rare phenomenon; I do not think there are more than five male homosexuals in the whole of his thickly peopled works; of these, two are almost exclusively pathics. He states categorically that they all vary in their secondary sexual characteristics from more normal males, as well as in their voice and character.¹⁶ The attitude of society has forced them to be somewhat false and treacherous.

There are even fewer exclusive female homosexuals; I can only recollect three; but then as now it was a disorder much less marked and exclusive than its male counterpart. De Sade has a certain admiration for these women, finding them more intelligent and witty than the average. I have an impression on the other hand that he disliked the males, for he makes them nearly all slightly ridiculous, with their assumption of being a nation within the nation; he emphasizes, however, their cruel position in society and stresses their lack of responsibility for their habits. I am completely at a loss to understand the reasonings of those critics who suggest that de Sade was himself homosexual; for though he and his libertines have this habit, they also have all others; and the well-attested presence of mistresses through nearly the whole of his life in freedom makes it appear that this suggestion was considered by its authors to be merely another and gratuitous insult.

De Sade also dealt with the obsession of types – one case only likes red-headed women, another blonde sewing-hands¹⁷ – and the desire for various pantomimes.¹⁸ Among other generalizations he remarks that impotents, or almost-impotents, are always spiteful and cruel, that degradation grows with age, and that all sexual activity, especially when repressed or when carried to excess, can produce obsession amounting to monomania.

For de Sade, as has already been said, human happiness depends upon the greatest possible extension of pleasure. But since our constitution and nature would most probably keep us to one range of experience, either normal or perverted, it is only wilfully and by an intellectual effort that we can extend our possibilities for pleasure. This idea of deliberately cultivating our taste for sexual pleasures is indescribably shocking to us, for whom, with very few exceptions, Judeo-Christian morality is still a very strong restraint; and it is because de Sade did this and sincerely advised others to do it that his reputation is surrounded by an aura of horror far greater than that of the most repulsive lust-murderers, from Gilles de Retz* to Jack the Ripper. But it is only in the sexual sphere that this is considered reprehensible; in all other human activities the cultivation of a wider taste is held to be most praiseworthy. The study and

* Or so reputed. There seems reason, however, to believe that de Retz was a self-immolated witch, rather than a monster. See Murray, *God of the Witches*, also Fleuret, *De Gilles de Rais à Guillaume Apollinaire*.

development of the arts has no other aim than to enable us to perceive beauty and harmony in shapes, sounds and colours that were before either meaningless or repulsive. And an English country parson, who would faint with horror if it were suggested that he or his wife should try to extend in any way their sexual pleasures, will have no hesitation in smearing his child with the bloody tail of a newly killed fox and encouraging him to enjoy such activity, or in feeding on such stomach-turning delicacies as putrescent game or cheese. And not only will he manage to swallow such naturally revolting food, he will consider it more enjoyable than ordinary nourishment, and will refuse fresh game or cheese as flat and tasteless. 'The greatest pleasures are born from conquered repugnances.'¹⁹

I have used this metaphor purposely as being the most apt; de Sade himself employs it often: 'Do we not see every day people who have accustomed their palate to an irritation which pleases them, alongside people who could not for a moment support such irritation?'²⁰

It follows that the sphere of sexual pleasures can only be extended by overcoming the reactions of disgust or fear. These two notions are so intimately linked that it is difficult to tell where moral fear ends and physical fear begins. To continue the gastronomic metaphor, I do not know whether I am more repelled by the notion of eating rotten meat or by the fear that the experience will be physically dangerous. It needs both courage and imagination to overcome these natural reactions; for encouragement there is the obvious and great pleasure taken by other people in what seems to be unpleasant or meaningless activity.

Courage is a temperamental quality and little can be done to supply its absence, save by demonstration and argument to show that what is feared is weak or meaningless. This de Sade does at enormous length, using every argument to show that the religious or moral prohibitions applied to certain acts are unfounded; from the moment the result is pleasure the proceeding must be natural, for pleasure is a stimulus of nature exclusively.

But such courage, whether natural or instilled, is useless without imagination. 'Imagination is pleasure's spur . . . directs everything, is the motive of everything; is it not thence that our pleasure comes? Is it not from that that the sharpest pleasures arise?'²¹ And again, 'Didn't you tell me that the pleasantest moral sensations come from the imagination? Well, if we allow that imagination to wander freely, if we let it cross the last frontiers which religion, decency, humanity, virtue, in a word all our so-called duties would erect to it, would not its divagations become prodigious? And wouldn't their very immensity irritate us the more? In which case the more we wish to be moved, to feel violently, the more must we give rein to our imagination in the most singular routes. . . .'²²

It was de Sade's considered and very sincere opinion that pleasure,

and especially physical and sexual pleasure, is the chief aim of human existence; 'we are born to "copulate"' he says in almost the same words as D. H. Lawrence (incidentally had these two known of each other they would have hated and despised each other's ideas) - 'We are born to "copulate," we accomplish Nature's laws in "copulating," and any human law which goes against Nature's is only worthy of disdain.'²³ It is for that reason that he preaches 'your body is yours and yours alone; you are the only person in the world who has a right to take pleasure from it and to permit whoever you will to get pleasure from it. Take advantage of the happiest time of your life; they are but too short those happy years of our pleasures; if we are fortunate enough to have taken advantage of them pleasant memories console and divert us in our old age. Do we waste them? . . . bitter regrets and horrible remorse rend us, and join with the torments of age to surround us with tears and thorns on the sad path of the grave . . .'²⁴

It is now perhaps easier to understand why de Sade wished for legally enforced promiscuity. Happiness depends on the greatest possible extension of sexual pleasure; but his very strong regards for the rights of every individual prevents him conceiving the idea of a caste of slaves or quasi-slaves²⁵ who will be the objects by which this extension of pleasure is to be obtained; and therefore his only solution was to give everybody momentary rights over the body of every citizen.

III

So far we have only dealt with physical satisfactions. De Sade admits that the pleasures which can be got from the exercise of virtues, such as kindness, pity or charity are very real, but claims that for that reason they contain no special merit.²⁶ Moreover he considers the obligations of gratitude intolerable; 'A man by a gratuitous kind action puts himself above you, hurts your pride and causes you thereby to feel an unpardonable mortification.'²⁷ It may be remembered that charity was one of the undesirable qualities done away with by the constitution of Tamoe. He also fully acknowledges the very great pleasures which can be gained from the arts;²⁸ he even points out the great poetry of some parts of the Bible.²⁹ But he does not consider such joys to be incompatible with, or superior to, physical pleasure.

There are, however, three emotions very intimately connected with sex - desire, love and jealousy. For de Sade desire is sometimes as pleasurable as satisfaction ('Happiness is not in the enjoyment but in the desire, and in destroying the difficulties in the way of its accomplishment . . .'³⁰); love is misery and folly, jealousy a useless insult.

De Sade takes love very seriously indeed; there are at least three

long passages, one over thirty pages, entirely devoted to its analysis. In its intensity however it is a rare phenomenon; I can only think of three characters in his works who persist in love after enjoyment and knowledge, with perhaps the unhappy Justine as a fourth, who naturally falls in love with a homosexual. The following definition of love seems to me adequate:

'We call love that interior sentiment which draws us, as it were in spite of ourselves, towards some object, which makes us desire to unite ourselves with it, to be ceaselessly near it, which flatters and intoxicates us when we succeed in thus uniting ourselves, and which torments us and drives us to despair when some foreign cause makes us break this union. If this extravagance never drew us to anything except pleasure taken with this ardour and intoxication it would merely be ridiculous; but since it leads us to a certain metaphysic which changes us into the loved object and makes its actions, needs and desires as dear as our own, by that alone it becomes extremely dangerous by making us neglect our interests for those of the loved one; by identifying us, so to speak, with this object it makes us adopt its misfortunes and griefs and add them to the sum of our own. Besides the fear of losing this object or of seeing its affections cool disturbs us ceaselessly; and from the calmest state of mind we pass insensibly to the cruellest that can be found in the world. If the recompense and the reward of so much misery was anything other than ordinary pleasure, perhaps I would advise risking it; but all the cares, torments and thorns of love only lead to what one can easily gain without it; where then is its use?

'When I meet a beautiful woman and fall in love with her, I haven't any different aim from the man who sees and desires her without any sort of love. We both wish to go to bed with her; he only wants her body, whereas I, through a false and dangerous metaphysic, blind myself on my real motive which is exactly the same as my rival's, and persuade myself that I merely want her heart, that all idea of sex is excluded, and I persuade myself so well that I would willingly agree with that woman to love her for herself alone, and to gain her heart at the cost of sacrificing all my physical desires.'⁸¹

Madame de Mistival says to the girl she is educating: 'You talk about the bonds of love; may you never know them! For the sake of the happiness I wish for you I pray that your heart may never know such sentiments! What is love? It can only be considered, I suppose, as the resulting effects of the qualities of a beautiful object on us; these effects carry us away and inflame us; if we possess this object we are happy; if we cannot obtain it we are in despair. But what is the basis of this sentiment? Desire. And what are its results? Madness. Let us keep to the motive and protect ourselves from the results. The motive is to possess the object; very well, let us try to succeed, but with prudence; let us take our pleasure when we possess the opportunity and console ourselves in the

opposite case; a thousand other objects similar and often far better than the one we have lost will console us; all men and all women are alike. . . . What a deception that intoxication is which absorbs in us the results of our senses and puts us into such a state that we only see, we only live through the adored object! Is that living? Isn't it rather depriving ourselves voluntarily of all life's charms? Isn't it insisting in staying in a burning fever which absorbs and devours us without leaving us other happiness than metaphysical pleasures so similar to the effects of madness? If we were certain always to love the adored object, and never to be separated from it, love would still be an extravagance doubtless, but at least it would be excusable. But does that happen? Have we any examples of these eternal unions which never subside? A few months' enjoyment will soon put the object in its rightful place and make us blush for the incense which we have burned on its altars; often we cannot even conceive what was capable of so seducing us."³²

The following passage on jealousy, love and desire will complete the description of de Sade's views on these subjects. 'I have sometimes heard it asked whether jealousy were a flattering or an insulting mania, as far as the woman is concerned, and I admit that I have never doubted that since this emotion was merely selfish, women have nothing to gain by the action it produces on the spirit of their lovers. One isn't jealous because one loves a woman very deeply but because one fears the humiliation which would result from her changing; and the proof that this passion is purely egoist is that there is not a single honest lover who would not agree that he would rather see his mistress dead than unfaithful. Consequently it is her inconstancy rather than her loss which afflicts us, and therefore ourselves alone whom we consult in this event. From which I conclude that after the unpardonable extravagance of being in love with a woman the greatest that one can commit is to be jealous of her. This sentiment is insulting for a woman, since it proves to her that we do not esteem her; it is painful for us and always useless, for it is a sure method of suggesting to a woman the desire to deceive us by letting her see the fear that we have of that happening. Jealousy and fear of cuckoldry are two things which clamp prejudice on to our pleasure with women; without this cursed habit of foolishly desiring to bind moral and physical things together on this subject we would soon get rid of our prejudices. Can't you go to bed with a woman without loving her, and can't you love her without going to bed with her? But what need is there for the heart to have a rôle in a situation in which only the body plays a part? It seems to me that there are there two very different desires and needs. Araminta has the loveliest body in the world; her voluptuous face and her dark eyes full of fire . . . promise the greatest pleasure. What need is there that the sentiments of my heart should accompany the act which gives me the body of this creature? It seems to me again that love and pleasure are two very different things; that

not only is it not necessary to love to get pleasure, but even that it is enough to get pleasure not to love. For feelings of tenderness arise from similarities of temperament and taste, and are in no way inspired by lovely breasts or a well-turned bottom; and these objects which, according to our tastes, can excite strongly our physical affections have not, it seems to me, the same right on our moral ones. To continue my comparison: Jane is ugly, forty years old, without a single grace in all her person, not a regular feature, not a single beauty; but she is witty and has a charming character and millions of traits which agree with my sentiments and my tastes; I have no desire to go to bed with Jane but I shall nevertheless love her madly; I shall want very strongly to have Araminta, but I will detest her cordially as soon as the fever of desire has passed, because I have only found in her a body, and none of the moral qualities which could gain for her the affections of my heart.⁸³

It may be added that de Sade shared the family reverence for the family poet, Petrarch, whom he several times refers to as 'the sweet singer of Vaucluse.' His ancestress, Laura, even appears to him in his dreams and consoles him.⁸⁴

Sadism and Algotagnia

Cruelty has a human heart,
And Jealousy a human face;
Terror the human form divine
And Secrecy the human dress.

The human dress is forged iron,
The human form a fiery forge,
The human face a furnace seal'd,
The human heart its hungry gorge.

— W. BLAKE

*Appendix to the Songs of
Innocence and Experience*

I

NEARLY a century after de Sade had made his analysis of the sexual instincts and perversions a German professor called Krafft-Ebing started the work anew, and with a mixture of impropriety and ignorance took de Sade's name for one of the perversions he had described and defined Sadism as 'sexual emotion associated with the wish to inflict pain and use violence'; with even greater impertinence he took the name of a living second-rate novelist, Sacher-Masoch, to give the name Masochism to 'the desire to be treated harshly, humiliated and ill-used'.

Although these definitions were so unsatisfactory that they have been altered and amended by nearly every writer on the subject since, the words have passed into almost universal use and have indeed been so extended as to become nearly meaningless. Sadism now, at any rate for lay writers, is practically a synonym for cruelty, and masochism for unhappiness with a slight suggestion of pleasure; as such they are useless additions to an already overloaded vocabulary and merely serve to give a false impression of objective detachment and an aura of non-existent science.

Seeing that the connection between sexual pleasure and pain is a single manifestation without clear dividing marks between the active and passive attitudes, Havelock Ellis followed Schrenck-Notzing in using the term 'algotagnia' for all activities in which sex and external pain were united. I would like to continue the use of this term for such manifestations and keep the word Sadism for

the special group of wishes which de Sade was the first person to describe and which constitutes by far his most important contribution to psychology. I am aware of the obvious ambiguity of using a word which has already so many meanings, but I cannot see any way out of the dilemma; for it is de Sade's contribution to analysis and there is no existing word to cover the points evolved. I have neither the qualifications nor the desire to invent another hybrid term.

I should like to recall here the passage already quoted in Chapter 3 on cause and effect in which he says, 'Since all things act and react on one another incessantly they produce and undergo change at the same time.' For Sadism and sex are two groups of wishes strongly joined and as strongly separated; they each modify the other considerably but it cannot be said that either causes the other; they act and react incessantly on one another.

Sadism, as described by its analyst, I would define as *the pleasure felt from the observed modifications on the external world produced by the will of the observer*. This is a universal instinct and very strong, only following the instinct for self-preservation, and the sex instincts, of which it is a manifestation and which are a manifestation of it. It might also be defined as 'pleasure in the ego's modifications of the external world', but I think the first definition is clearer.

It will be seen that this definition is extremely wide and covers an enormous range of human activity from the creation of works of art to the blowing up of bridges, from making little girls happy by giving them sweets to making them cry by slapping them. It would be incorrect however to say that it covers all human activities for there are two essential clauses: there must be sensible modifications of the external world, and they must be the willed production of the agent. That is to say that there can be Sadistic satisfaction in painting a picture, but not in painting a house under another person's orders and following another person's taste; there can be Sadistic pleasure in killing a person, but not if that killing is ordered and independent of the killer.

Like all human emotions this is ambivalent, and can be either constructive or destructive. It can be applied to people or things, but obviously the greatest and most marked modifications can be made on other human beings; and emotional connections with other human beings are liable to be more or less sexual. In sexual intercourse itself the modifications are very strong and obvious; by your actions exclusively a person like the rest of the world is changed into a writhing, panting, often almost speechless animal in an ecstasy of pleasure-pain.

Which is it? Pleasure or pain? Could an uninstructed observer watching human beings or animals 'copulate' tell whether the couple were making love or fighting, whether the spasms were unbearable pleasure or unbearable pain?

To my mind it is a question of degree, not of difference. All pleasure is bounded by pain in its excess, sometimes on both sides, sometimes on one side only. The pleasures of temperature for instance are confined within a very narrow limit with unnumbered degrees of pain on either side. Some people can push back the limits of pleasure a little; they can train themselves to enjoy bathing in water so cold or so hot that to most others it would be agony; but the limits of pain are still there. The same standard is applicable to the pleasures of the other senses :

Pleasure is pain diminished,
Pain is the absolute.

What is certain is that you can produce far greater, more varied, and more obvious modifications on other people by pain than by pleasure, and therefore greater satisfaction for the agent; and it is because de Sade described also these satisfactions that his name and his reputation have received their present stigma from people who can understand the letter, even if they completely ignore the spirit.

It is because pain and destruction are easier and more spectacular that de Sade principally attributed such actions to his characters, whom he described as portraying 'not man as he is or pretends to be, but as he can be, as he is influenced by vice and all passions' shocks'; and because of his pessimistic view of human nature he made destructive Sadism far more common than constructive. This is particularly true of *La Nouvelle Justine*, the work by which he is most often judged; in a number of his other works this feature is less stressed. *La Nouvelle Justine* is above everything an attempt to explain why the revolution failed and is throughout coloured by the fact of de Sade's imprisonment for moderantism. His conclusion is that by far the greater number of people desire to hurt and oppress their fellows; the desire to aid and assist them is far less common - though by no means absent from this work, as many commentators suggest. To illustrate this point he allows his characters to do whatever their imaginations suggest; and it follows from his view of human nature that they mostly tend to torture, cruelty, and murder. His literary conscience prevents him presenting this for him almost universal human trait with too great a monotony - in all his works the gradation and development of his revelations are most cunningly revealed bit by bit; consequently his imagination and knowledge lead him to describe an astounding collection of tortures. Both his personal experience and his historical researches were called into play; many of the acts described have direct historical parallels in the Revolutionary butcheries; a number of others are taken directly from the amusements of such people as Charolais, Blaise Ferrage, Count Potocki, Bullion, the Duke de Richelieu and many others both of his own and former epochs. It

might indeed be claimed that as far as the scenes of cruelty in *Justine* and *Juliette* are concerned de Sade was acting less as an imaginative writer than as an anthologist. Although this description of tortures and murders is usually supposed to be de Sade's chief originality, there is actually very little which could not be paralleled in Foxe's or Wright's *Book of Martyrs*; the horrors described and illustrated in these pious books are as frightful as those of de Sade; he merely collected the facts in the form of fiction and arranged them to create a crescendo; but if he had only done this he would have made a work of little use, and one which moreover would not have been condemned but which might well have served for the secret gloatings and morbid imaginations of the humanitarian, as Foxe for the pious protestant. The description of the acts of Bishop Bonner, for example, by Wright is almost to the vocabulary identical with that of the clergy by de Sade. It is because he went behind the religious, political or legal excuses for these acts and described with accuracy and insight the hidden motives of the butchers and persecutors that his work becomes extraordinarily original and important; and it is for the same reason that the authorities who still use the same excuses for the same brutalities have condemned and pursued his work with a vigour they have never applied to any other writer. The people who imagine that de Sade intended *Justine* and *Juliette* to be incitements to cruelty show extraordinarily little insight, unless indeed they are speaking from personal experience, and find even the coldest and most objective descriptions exciting.

Even in these works de Sade did not entirely ignore constructive Sadism, though, except for a couple of scientists, it is mostly manifested by kindness and decoration.

A more mental side of this destructive Sadism is the destruction of barriers, moral or legal, and the pleasure of knowing that one's actions or words would cause extreme distress to other people. The search for this pleasure – the reputation of dare-devilry – will often lead to seemingly paradoxical results – the sinking of the ego in self-sought humiliation. The most obvious expression of this is the constant confession of the guilt of notorious crimes by actually innocent people.

The amount of satisfaction this instinct seeks naturally varies with the individual character and circumstances. But it is a strong and universal instinct, and if not granted any direct satisfaction will seek it in devious and usually socially more harmful ways. Like the sexual instinct, chance may determine for the individual a fixation for one special form of satisfaction.

The most direct methods of satisfaction are constructive work of any sort, and domineering, either sexually, individually, or socially; the most spectacular – 'motiveless' crimes of destruction, particularly arson and murder. For most people sufficient direct satisfaction is impossible to obtain, and the lack is supplied by

imaginative fantasy, either self-inspired or suggested by entertainment.

It can be argued that mass production by machinofacture has eliminated a great deal of constructive Sadistic pleasure today. This is in part compensated by the introduction of mechanical tools for private amusement – cars, recorders, cameras – which enable some people to have the pleasure of 'doing things with their hands', of constructively modifying their environment. But these pleasures are too narrowly distributed to make a counter-balance. Very little direct destructive Sadism is allowed usually; lovers carve their initials on trees when they've got trees, and Nazis carve reversed swastikas on the faces of Jews, when they've got Jews; but on the whole people have to seek satisfaction either by identifying themselves with some larger group in the community – the party, the army, the empire – or by fantasy.

The amount of Sadistic satisfaction afforded by popular entertainment is as astounding as it is historically unparalleled. The most direct are those entertainments in which death – Sadistic destruction at its most complete – plays a potential, and often an actual part – speed-racing in various dangerous machines, perilous acrobatics and so on. But the forms which touch the greatest public are the exteriorized fantasies, the cinema, television, and the popular novel.

The cinema is becoming more and more Sadistic. Film after film is engaged in the contemplation of successful crime and murder, or of beauty and virtue in distress – the themes of *Justine* and *Juliette*. Producers are ingenious in inventing ever new agonized deaths for the 'villains', ever new perils, humiliations and terrors for the 'heroes' and 'heroines'.

But it is in literature that the most spectacular change has taken place. The elaborate contemplation of murder and crime and especially gangsters in the Press is a very popular phenomenon of this century. The fantasy of Sadistic crime in recent years has dominated the novel in unexampled fashion. Before the first world war the novel of crime or detection was comparatively not much occupied with destruction – Sherlock Holmes was far more engaged with robberies, coining, kidnapping, lost documents, etc., than he was with murder; and the novels of Phillips Oppenheim, which are fairly typical of the period, are mostly concerned with lost documents. But today a detective story means a story about murder. I should think the words 'death' or 'murder' occur in the title of a quarter of the books published – far more frequently than any other noun; the novels in question range from the classical contemplation of evidence with one corpse in the first chapter to orgies of blood-letting, with a mechanical triumph of law in the end. The most popular books reduce detection to a minimum. The happy weakening of the bonds of Christian 'morality' and the spread of contraceptive knowledge has made the demands for vicarious sexual

satisfaction less strong; the conditions of modern life have made the demands for vicarious Sadistic satisfaction far stronger, and so Charles Garvice and Elinor Glyn have given place to Mickey Spillane and James Hadley Chase as the most popular dream manufacturers. It is a curious comment on the minds of ministers of the Church that they should think the contemplation of murder more moral than the contemplation of love; for clergymen frequently state in the Press that the detective story is far healthier than the 'sex' novel.

There is one widespread type of Sadist today that de Sade didn't foresee, the only type as far as I know; and that is the animal lover. To be the master tyrant and destiny of any animal is already direct Sadistic satisfaction; but it is apparently not sufficient. The antivivisectionists protest against the use of animals for the relief of human suffering; and often they say, with unconscious self-revelation, that if such experiments must be made, they should be performed on other humans - murderers, communists, huns. And their continuous charge of sadism (meaning pleasurable cruelty) against scientists is equally damning; 'I have always remarked that people who are very quick to suspect a certain sort of crime are those who are addicted to it themselves; it is very easy to conceive what one admits, but not so easy to understand what is repugnant.'¹ This generalization of de Sade is very widely applicable.

There is one other pleasure which is usually classed as Sadistic, but I think incorrectly - the pleasure that comes from the contemplation of pain, misery or discomfort of others which cannot possibly be considered the work of the contemplator (this must not be confused with fantasy in which the spectator temporarily identifies himself with the active Sadist); this is a very real and general pleasure for which there is no name in English but which the Germans call *Schadenfreude*. I do not think this pleasure is Sadistic but, as it were, the opposite face of pity. The one is sorrow for ills that might have touched us, but did not, the other joy for ills that might have touched us, but have not. It is therefore to my mind more closely connected with the instinct for self-preservation than with that of construction-destruction. De Sade considered this pleasure the most barbarous of all: 'I learned then that if there are some men who can get pleasure from the pains of others under the impulsion of revenge or loathsome lust, there are others so barbarously organized that they enjoy these same pleasures without other motives than the satisfaction of pride or the most horrible curiosity. Man is then naturally evil, in the delirium of his passions as much as when they are calm, and in both cases the ills of his fellow can become the source of execrable pleasures for him.'²

The criminal Noircœur, in advising Juliette how to treat a ward who has been entrusted to her, analyses and distinguishes the two pleasures. 'What I should do in your place,' he says, 'would be to amuse myself as much as I wanted with this girl, and steal her

fortune, and then place her in such an unhappy position that you can at every moment increase your happiness by the charms of watching her languish; as far as pleasure is concerned that will be better than killing her. The happiness I advise will be far stronger; for you will have both the physical satisfaction from the pleasures you have had with her and the intellectual satisfaction of comparing her lot with yours; for happiness consists more in those sorts of comparisons than in actual pleasures. It is a thousand times sweeter to say when you see miserable people, "I am not like them and that is what puts me above them," than merely to say, "I am enjoying myself, but I am enjoying myself in the midst of people as happy as I am." It is the privations of others which make our pleasures felt; in the midst of equals we could never be content; that is why it is said so rightly that to be happy one should always look down, not up. If then it is the spectacle of others' misery whose comparison must complete our happiness one must obviously not relieve them . . . Not only that: we must create unfortunates whenever the opportunity occurs to multiply that class and to compose one which, since it is your own work, will make far sharper the pleasures provided. So the full enjoyment would be to reduce this girl to asking charity and then refuse her cruelly, and thereby increase your pleasures by a comparison the more striking and enjoyable since it will be your doing.⁸

II

In the works of de Sade that are left to us there is no complete definition of Sadism. Whether it existed in any of his lost philosophical works can only be a matter of speculation; it is probable that it did not, for psychology as a study had still to be invented. But as I will try to show he got very near to defining it; and in *Juliette* he wrote a novel of Sadism in action. I should have thought the completely non-sexual acts from which the actors of this novel get satisfaction would have been enough to show other readers that Sadism wasn't merely a branch of sex; for though he uses the same physiological terms for the satisfaction felt, he also does so for gluttony.

The best possible example will be an extract from the book. The following is an incident which occurred when Juliette was about twenty-one; she was at that time at the height of her prosperity as Saint-Fond's mistress; she was left alone by him in his country house; after seven years of decreasingly unpleasant experience she was enjoying for the first time a little independence. The story is told by her.

'But in what sort of a moral state had so much wealth left me? My friends, I hardly dare tell you, and yet I must confess. The extreme debauchery in which my senses were daily bathed had so

dulled the reactions of my soul that, helped as I was by evil counsels from all sides, I do not believe I would have given a penny of my millions to save a poor man's life. About that time a terrible famine developed round my estate; all the peasants were reduced to the greatest distress; there were horrible scenes, daughters sold into debauchery, babies abandoned and several suicides. People came to beg my charity; I held firm and with great heartlessness explained my refusals on the grounds of the enormous expenses my gardens were giving me. "How can I afford charity" I would ask insolently, "when I have to build mirrored boudoirs in my shrubberies and adorn my alleys with Venuses, Cupids and Sapphos?" In vain people placed before my calm eyes whatever they thought would be most likely to touch me: mothers in rags, naked children, skeletons eaten up with hunger; nothing shook me, nothing moved me from my habitual calm, I never gave anything except refusals. Then when I analysed my sensations, I felt, just as my teachers had told me, in place of the painful sensations of pity a certain pleasure produced by the harm which I thought I was doing in refusing to help these unhappy people, which circulated in my nerves a burning feeling similar to that which consumes us each time we break a restraint or overcome a prejudice. I thought from that moment how voluptuous it could be to put one's principles into action; and it was also from that moment that I realized that if the spectacle of unhappiness caused by chance could produce so perfect a sensual response in characters disposed or taught as I had been, the spectacle of unhappiness caused by oneself must increase this pleasure; and since as you know my imagination always goes to extremes, you cannot conceive what delicious possibilities this called up. The argument was simple; I felt pleasure in simply refusing to alleviate unhappiness, what would I not feel if I was myself the first cause of this unhappiness? If it is pleasant to resist doing good, I said to myself, it should be delicious to do harm. I recalled and played with that idea in those dangerous moments when the body catches fire from spiritual pleasures, moments which one denies oneself the less since nothing stands in the way of unusual wishes or impetuous desires, and the sensations felt are stronger in relation to the number or sacredness of the restraints which one breaks. Once the dream is finished, little harm would be done if one became sensible again; this is what is called sins of the imagination. As is well known, they hurt nobody. But unfortunately one sometimes goes further. What, one dares to ask oneself, would be the actualization of such an idea, since just the rubbing on my nerves moves them so strongly; one gives a life to the cursed nightmare, and its existence is crime.

'A quarter of a league from my place there was a wretched cottage which belonged to a very poor peasant called Martin Des Granges, who had eight children and a wife whose respectability and good management justified her being called a treasure. Would you believe that that asylum of unhappiness and virtue excited my criminal

madness? It is true then that crime is a delicious thing; it is certain that the torch of lust is lit at the fire which devours us . . . that we only have to wake it in ourselves and we only need crime to give that delicious passion the greatest possible amount of activity on our nerves.

'Elvire, my maid, and I had brought some Bologna phosphorus with us, and I had ordered the lively and intelligent girl to distract the whole family while I went and hid the phosphorus cunningly in the straw of the attic above these unhappy people's room. I came back, the children kissed me, the mother chatted with me about the little details of her household, the father wanted me to take some refreshment, and took a lot of trouble to entertain me . . . None of that softened me, I was not touched by anything; I analyse myself and find that, far from feeling the dreary emotion of pity, my whole organization was in a delicious fever; at the slightest touch I should have melted. I redoubled my kindnesses for all the members of this worthy family into whose bosom I have just carried murder; duplicity is at its height, and the more I fool them the more excited I become. I give the mother ribbons, the children candy. We return home but my delirium is such that I can't make the return journey without asking Elvire to relieve the terrible state I am in. We push into a wood. . . . When we got back to the house I was in an indescribable condition, it seemed as if every disorder and every vice had combined together to debauch my heart, I was in a sort of drunkenness, a sort of madness; there was nothing I would not have done, no sort of lust with which I would not have soiled myself. I was in despair that I had only touched so small a portion of humanity, I would have wished that the whole of nature could have felt the effects of my imaginations. I threw myself naked on the sofa in one of my boudoirs and ordered Elvire to bring all my men to me, and to tell them they could do everything they liked with me provided they insulted me and treated me like a whore. I was handled, pinched, beaten, slapped . . . ; I should have liked to have had twenty altars more to accept the offerings. Some brought friends whom I had never seen; I refused nothing, I was everybody's plaything . . . One of these coarse libertines (I allowed anything) took it into his head to say he didn't want to have me on sofas but in muck . . . I let him drag me to a heap of dung, and prostitute myself there like a sow, and excited him to humiliate me even more. The fellow does so, and only leaves me after he has . . . on my face. . . . And I was happy; the more I wallowed in filth and infamy, the more my imagination burned with lust and the more my delirium increased. In less than two hours I was had more than twenty times, while Elvire . . . and nothing, no nothing calmed the cruel state into which I was plunged by the idea of the crime I had just committed.

'We went upstairs again to my boudoir, and saw the sky lit up. "Oh! madame" said Elvire, as she opened the window, "Look, look! Fire! Fire where we were this morning!" - I fell down in

what was almost a faint . . . Alone with my beautiful maid I ask her to relieve me once more . . . "Let us go out" I said to her, "I think I hear cries, let us go out to savour this delicious scene, Elvire, it is my doing, come and satiate yourself with me . . . I must see everything, I must hear everything, I don't want to let anything escape me." We both ran out with our hair flowing, our dresses in disorder, intoxicated; we were like a pair of bacchantes. Twenty yards from the scene of horror, behind a little mound which hid us from others while allowing us to see everything. I fell once more into the arms of Elvire who was almost as worked up as I was. We . . . one another by the light of the murderous flames which my ferocity had lit, to the sound of the shrill cries of misery and despair which my lust had called forth and I was the happiest of women.

"At last we got up to see the details of my misdemeanour. I note with grief that two victims have escaped me; I recognize the other corpses and turn them over with my foot. "All these people were alive this morning" I say to myself, "I have destroyed them all in a few hours . . . just for 'pleasure'. . . . And so that's what murder is: a little matter disorganized, a few combinations changed, some atoms broken and returned to nature's crucible who will send them back in a few days in another form; well where is the harm in that? Are a woman or child dearer to nature than flies or worms? If I take life from the one I give it to the other; what harm have I done to nature?" This little revolt of my intelligence against my feelings gave a strong movement to the electric globules of my nerves. . . . If I had been completely alone, I honestly do not know to what lengths my madness might not have carried me. I might have been as cruel as the Caribs and devoured my victims. They were there in a heap . . . the father and one of the children were the only ones to escape; the mother and seven of the children were before my eyes; and I said to myself as I looked at them and even touched them . . . "It is I who have just committed these murders, they are my work and mine alone"; and I melted once more. No traces were left of the house; one could barely guess where it had stood.

"Will you believe me, my friends, that when I told this story to Lady Clairwil, she said I had only played with crime and had acted like a coward?

"There are three or four serious mistakes" she said "in the way you carried your plan out. First of all (and I tell you all this so that you can understand this extraordinary woman better) . . . first of all your public behaviour was improper, and if somebody had unfortunately come upon the scene they would have guessed you were a criminal by your disorder and your actions. Watch out for this fault. Be as ardent as you like in private, but completely phlegmatic in public. If you hold back your lustful desires, they will be yet stronger.

"Secondly, you didn't plan on a big scale; for you must agree that with a large township of seven or eight villages under your

windows, it is restrained, it is modest, it is pitiful to let oneself go on a single house in an isolated spot, for fear that the flames might spread and increase the extent of your little misdemeanour; one can guess that you trembled when you carried it out.

“This means you have lost a pleasure, for the pleasures of crime must not be restrained. I know them. If the imagination has not thought of everything, if one's hand hasn't executed everything it is impossible for the delirium to be complete because there is always the feeling of remorse: *I could have done more and I have not done it*. Feelings of remorse for virtue are worse than those for crime. When one is virtuous and has committed a wicked action, one can always imagine that the number of good deeds will wash out the stain; and since one easily persuades oneself that what one wants is true, one ends by calming one's feeling. But the person who, like us, is eagerly pursuing the career of vice, can never forgive a lost opportunity because nothing can make it good, virtue is no help; and the resolution which he will make to do something worse, though it will heat his imagination in favour of ill-doing even more, will surely not console him for the lost opportunity.

“And even considering your little plan” Clairwil went on, “you made one further big mistake; I would have had Des Granges prosecuted. He was in a position to be burnt at the stake for arson, and you can be sure that if I had been in your place I should not have failed to have this done. When a fire starts in the house of one of the lower orders on your estate, don't you know that you have the legal right to have the affair looked into by your local magistrates to make sure that he isn't guilty. How do you know that that fellow didn't want to get rid of his wife and children to go and cadge in another part of the country? As soon as his back was turned, you ought to have had him arrested as a fugitive and incendiary and handed him over to justice. With a few louis you could find witnesses, Elvire herself would help you; she would bear witness that in the morning she had seen the man wandering in his attic without any good reason; that she had questioned him and he hadn't been able to answer her questions; and in a week you would have been given the voluptuous sight of the man being burnt at your front door. Let this be a lesson to you, Juliette, never imagine a crime without extending it, and when you are in action, improve on your ideas once more.”

“Such, my friends, are the cruel additions that Clairwil would have liked to have seen me put in the fault which I had confessed to her; and I will not conceal from you that I was deeply struck by her arguments and promised myself never to commit such serious mistakes again. I was particularly unhappy at the peasant's escape, and I don't know what I would not have given to see him roasted at my front door; I have never consoled myself for this escape.”⁴

In this incident can be seen all the typical features of the destructive Sadism as described by this author and perpetrated by so many lesser men; its independence of and interdependence with sex; its

continuous emphasis on the personal nature of the act; the preference given to the influence of personality on other people rather than on objects; and the desire for voluntary humiliation. It also contains the continual dilemma of the Sadistic hero - the impossibility of real crime. 'I have rationalized my fantasies too well,' Clairwil complains. 'It would have been a thousand times better if I had never done so; if I had left them in their envelope of crime they would at least have excited me, but the indifference my philosophy gives them prevents them touching me any more.'⁵ As Proust and Huysmans have both pointed out, this is the final misery of evil.

Torture, murder, and arson are the most satisfying as they are the most complete acts of destructive Sadism; de Sade, who had seen the uncontrolled excesses of the nobles before the Revolution and of the masses during it knew to what lengths unfettered human nature can go; and consequently they form the chief diversions of the vile characters he writes about. But not the only ones; he also notes the pleasures to be got from frightening people by banging doors, or from making little girls cry, from scandal-mongering or from shocking people; 'There is a petty triumph for one's amour-propre in shocking people, which is not to be despised.'⁶

De Sade considered that this human instinct, especially when deprived of direct satisfaction, was the most dangerous of all anti-social forces; to prevent its destructive forces from causing too much havoc he wanted it to be canalized into sexual activity. 'There is not a man who doesn't want to be a despot when he's excited; he seems to have less pleasure if others seem to enjoy themselves as much as he. By a sort of pride, which is quite understandable in such a situation, he would like to be the only man in the world able to experience what he feels; the idea of seeing another have the same pleasure as himself degrades him to a sort of equality which destroys the unspeakable pleasures of despotism at such a moment. Incidentally it is incorrect that one can find pleasure in giving pleasure to others. In doing harm, on the other hand, a man experiences all the charms which a nervous individual feels in the exercise of his forces; he dominates then, he is a tyrant; and what a difference for his amour-propre.'⁷ 'History provides thousands of examples of female cruelty, and it is on account of their natural inclination to such behaviour that I should like women to make a habit of employing active flagellation, by which means cruel men satisfy their ferocity. A few women do, I know, but not nearly as many as I should like. Society would profit by means of this outlet for female cruelty; for if they cannot hurt in this way they will in another, spreading their poison in society and driving their husbands and families to destruction. Refusal to do good when the opportunity occurs and the refusal to help the unfortunate give some relief to that ferocity to which some women have a natural inclination, but it is a weak one, and often too far removed from the need that they have to do worse. Un-

doubtedly there are other means by which a woman who is simultaneously sensitive and ferocious could calm her imperious passions, but they are dangerous.'⁸

It was for this reason - as a sort of social insurance - that de Sade wished for the universal brothels and for the visitors to find therein 'the most complete subordination with the right to punish arbitrarily, under the eyes of the guardians, any disobedience'. It would be interesting to find out whether such a policy would have the desired result.

It was for a similar reason that he proposed the adoption of cruel spectacles like bullfights, gladiators, boxing and wrestling. 'People would be frightened at first glance, I realize, at the project of such inhuman sports. But can you doubt that they would soon be as popular as your balls and comedies? Can you doubt that your fine ladies with their nerves and their vapours would not come to dissipate them at these popular massacres? The Porcias and Cornelias wept at the tragedies of Sophocles and yet went just as readily to the excitements of the Roman Circus and enjoyed the massacres of the Christians. Nero would give an excellent performance as Oedipus, and thereafter find great pleasure in cutting up Saint Cecilia's pretty breasts, or Saint Agatha's lovely buttocks, because both were foolish enough to believe in Christ. Such spectacles worthy of a great nation would only be revolting for us because our eyes are not accustomed to them; perhaps one would shudder at the former (the tragedies); one would crush one another to be present at the latter. Aren't our public places crowded every time a judicial murder takes place? (What is very strange is that it is mostly women; they have then more leaning to cruelty than we, and that because their organization is more sensitive. That is what fools don't understand.) It would be exactly the same case here. We would be consistent indeed to take objection to such things, while we allow so many secret atrocities. And who knows if, by thus giving issue to human cruelty we wouldn't dry up at the source of their mysterious crimes? The celebrated Maréchal de Retz would perhaps not have murdered four or five hundred children if there had been spectacles where his lust could have found satisfaction. . . .'⁹ It was probably with the same intention that he drew up a plan for a spectacle of gladiators. This meeting-ground of the catharsis of Aristotle and the sublimation of Freud is curious.

From the moment when he started his analysis of human behaviour de Sade stressed this desire for domination, which if it does not find an outlet sexually will create one elsewhere; in the *120 Journées* he makes his characters speak of 'the importance of despotism in the pleasures we enjoy,' 'the unhappy perversion which makes us take pleasure in the misfortunes we cause others'; in the castle where the orgies take place the sight of the instruments of torture alone was sufficient to maintain 'the subordination so essential in such cases, subordination from which derive nearly all the

pleasures of the persecutors'.¹⁰ And in *Justine* the murderous innkeeper's wife asks, 'What is crime? It is an action which subordinates men to us and raises us infallibly above them; it is the action which makes us the master of others' lives and fortunes and which therefore adds to our happiness that of the person who is sacrificed. Will people say that such stolen happiness cannot be perfect because it belongs to others? Fools! It is because it is stolen that it is good; if it were given it would be worthless: it must be snatched by force; it must draw tears from the person deprived and our sweetest pleasures are born from the assurance that we have grieved others.'¹¹

Sadistic pleasures can also be achieved from humiliation, provided it is willed, or willingly accepted. In a remarkable passage in *Les 120 Journées* which may well contain a reference to himself, de Sade expatiates on this theme. The old bawd had just described to the four debauchees a masochist who hires a man to insult and humiliate him; and the four wicked men discuss the case. "All these excesses are understandable" said Durcet who stammered because the little libertine was excited by the account of these horrors, "nothing is so simple as to love humiliation and to find pleasures in contempt, the man who loves ardently acts which are dishonourable finds pleasure in being dishonoured and must be excited when people tell him what he is, turpitude is a very well known pleasure for certain characters, one likes to be told what one has deserved, and it is impossible to imagine how far a man can go that way when he no longer blushes for anything, it is the same as with certain invalids who enjoy their illness." - "It's a question of cynicism" said Curval. . . . "Who does not know that there are people who are enthusiasts for punishment, and hasn't one seen people get excited at the very instant that they are publicly dishonoured, everyone knows the story of the Marquis de . . . who as soon as he heard the sentence which condemned him to be burned in effigy . . . cried *Foutredieu, now I've got to the place where I wanted to be, now I'm covered with opprobrium and infamy, leave me, leave me. . .*" "Those are facts" the Duke replied, "but explain the reasons to me." - "They are in our heart" Curval continued, "once a man has degraded himself, once he is vilified by excesses, he has given his soul a sort of vicious form from which nothing can in future remould it, in any other case shame would serve as a counter-balance to the vices to which his spirit would suggest he deliver himself, but in this case that can occur no longer, it is the first sentiment which he has extinguished, it is this which he has banished far away, and from the condition of no longer being able to blush to that of loving everything which calls for blushing is just one step; everything which would produce a disagreeable response in a soul otherwise constituted is then transformed into pleasure and from that moment everything which recalls one's new state that one has adopted can only be voluptuous." - "But what a journey in vice a man must

have made to be in that state," said the Bishop. – "I agree" said Curval, "but that journey is made imperceptibly, one only follows the flowers, one excess leads to another, the ever insatiable imagination soon leads us to the final stage, and as it has only hardened the heart in the course of its career, once it has reached the end, that heart which formerly contained some virtues no longer recognizes a single one. Accustomed to stronger things, such a man quickly shakes off the first soft and savourless impressions which till then had intoxicated him, and as he well realizes that infamy and dishonour will be the sequel of his new actions, so as not to have to fear them he begins to familiarize himself with them, and as soon as he has caressed these notions he loves them because they are of the same nature as his most recent conquests and he changes no more." "That's what makes correction so difficult" said the Bishop. – "You should say Impossible my friend, and how should the punishments which you inflict on the man you want to reform succeed in changing him, since, apart from a few deprivations, the state of humiliation which characterizes that of a punished person pleases him, amuses him, enchants him, and he rejoices privily that he has gone far enough to deserve to be treated in this fashion." "Oh, what an enigma mankind is!" said the Duke.¹²

The enigma of the human heart, that 'hungry gorge', was de Sade's constant preoccupation. His intention in writing his cynical descriptions, he claims, is because the portrayal of 'man's character, completely naked, furnishes all the necessary tints for the philosopher who cares to seize them, and after having seen him thus, one can surely divine the result of the spasms of his loathsome heart and fearful passions'.¹³

III

ALGOLAGNIA – the intimate connection of sexual activity and pain – is the meeting place of the sexual and constructive-destructive (Sadistic) wishes. From de Sade's analysis it would be incorrect to give either instinct the priority, to say that either was the cause of the other. The part played by cruelty in 'normal' sexual intercourse has been sufficiently dealt with by learned people who have made a study of such subjects, so that it is unnecessary to recapitulate their findings about love-bites and similar acts. Of cruelty de Sade says, "Far from being a vice, it is the first sentiment that Nature impresses on us. The child breaks his rattle, bites his nurse's breast, kills his pets long before he reaches the age of reason. Cruelty is instinctive in animals, in whom the laws of Nature are far more obvious than in us, and in savages who are nearer to Nature than civilized people; it would therefore be absurd to claim that it is a result of depravity. . . . Cruelty is in Nature; we are all born with a portion of cruelty that only education modifies; but education is not natural; it contravenes

Nature as much as cultivation does trees cruelty is then nothing else than man's energy uncorrupted by civilization. . . .'¹⁴

He continues: 'We generally distinguish two sorts of cruelty; that which is born from stupidity, which is never analysed and never reasoned about and likens the person with such a constitution to a wild beast . . . and the other which is the result of excessive sensitiveness of the organs, is only known to extremely delicate people, and the excesses which it carries them to are merely the refinements of their delicacy, too quickly disturbed by their excessive sensibility and which, to make their feelings more acute, employs all the resources of cruelty. How few people conceive these distinctions . . . How few feel them! But they exist and are unquestionable.'¹⁵

It is possible that de Sade was describing himself in this last passage. There is no question that his sensibility was excessive; his extreme devotion to and appreciation of the arts would alone show that. And it was his excessive horror for even minor and usually unnoticed cruelties apart from sexual excitement which drove him to the sweeping condemnation of humanity in *Justine* and *Juliette*, and to the endless attacks on the Church and the State.

His attempt to analyse algolagnia is for us to a great extent invalidated by his ideas of physics and anatomy; it is nevertheless I think of sufficient interest to give in some detail. Saint-Fond asks Noirceuil to explain how it is possible to obtain pleasure either by seeing others suffer or by suffering oneself. He replies as follows:

'According to the definition of logic, "Pain is merely a sentiment of aversion which the soul conceives for some movements contrary to the construction of the body it animates." That is what Nicole says; he distinguished in man an airy substance which he called soul from the material substance which we call body. Since I do not admit this edification and only see in man a completely material animal I will say that pain is the result of the lack of connection of foreign bodies with the organic molecules of which we are composed; so that instead of the atoms given out by these foreign bodies linking themselves with those of our nervous fluid, as they do in the commotion of pleasure, they only present their rough sides and prick and repel those of our nervous fluid and never mingle with them. Yet, although the effects are repellent, they are always effects, so that whether pleasure or pain is presented to us there is always a certain commotion of the nervous fluid. Well, what will prevent this commotion of pain, far stronger and more active than the other, eventually exciting in this fluid the same warmth which arises from the mingling of the atoms given off by the objects of pleasure? And being moved for the sake of the emotion, what is to prevent me from getting accustomed by habit to be as satisfied by the emotion produced by the repellent as by the sympathetic atoms? Made blasé by the effects of those which merely produce a simple sensation, why should I not accustom myself to receive the same pleasure from those whose effect is *poignant*? Both emotions are received in the

same place; the only difference is that one is mild and the other violent but for blasé people isn't the latter far preferable to the former? Do not we see daily people who have accustomed their palate to an irritation which pleases them, beside others who could not for a moment support such irritation? Now is it not true (once my hypothesis is admitted) that it is the habit of man in his pleasures to try to move the objects which serve these pleasures in the same way as he himself is moved, and that these actions are what is called in the metaphysics of pleasure "the effects of his delicacy"? Then is it not simple that a man with an organization such as we have described, by the same processes as ordinary people and by the same principles of delicacy, imagines that he will cause emotion to his partner by the same means which affect him? He is acting in just the same way as others; I agree that the results are different but the original motives are the same . . . both use on their partner the same means they themselves employ to procure pleasure.

"But," replies to this the person moved by a brutal pleasure, "that doesn't please me." Very well; it remains to be seen whether I can compel you or not. If I cannot, go away and leave me; if on the contrary my money, my credit or my position give me either some authority over you or some certainty of quashing your complaints, endure all that it pleases me to impose upon you without saying a word, because I must have my pleasure and I cannot get it without tormenting you and seeing your tears flow, because I am following the movement that Nature has placed in me, and by forcing you to share my hard and cruel pleasures, the only ones which can lift me to the summit of happiness, I am acting with the same principle as the effeminate lover who only knows the roses of a sentiment of which I only admit the thorns; for in tormenting you I am doing the only thing which moves me, just as he does in making sad love to his mistress. . . .

"It is not pleasure which you want to make your partner feel, but impressions you want to produce; that of pain is far stronger than that of pleasure, and it is incontestable that it is better that the commotion produced on our nerves by this foreign spectacle should be produced by pain rather than by pleasure. . . . One wants to give one's nerves a violent commotion; one realizes that that of pain will be far stronger than that of pleasure; one uses it and is satisfied.

"But," a fool will object, "beauty softens the heart, is interesting; it is an invitation to mildness, to pardon; how can you resist the tears of a pretty girl who begs mercy from her executioner with joined hands?" But actually . . . it is from this condition that the sort of libertine we are talking about gets his greatest pleasure; he would be very upset if he was working on an inanimate object which felt nothing; the objection is as absurd as if a man were to tell me one should never eat mutton, because the sheep is a mild animal. The passion of lust wishes to be served; it is exigent, tyrannous, it must be satisfied with the complete abstraction of any other consideration.

Beauty, virtue, innocence, candour, poverty, none of these can serve as protection to the object we covet. On the contrary, beauty excites us more; innocence, candour, virtue add further charms; poverty gives us our victim and makes it pliant; so that all these qualities only serve to inflame us the more and can only be regarded as further vehicles to our passions. There is here, moreover, a further barrier to break; there is the sort of pleasure which is got from sacrilege or the profanation of objects offered to our worship. That beautiful girl is an object for the homage of others; by making her the object of my sharpest and cruellest passions I have the double pleasure of sacrificing to this passion a beautiful object and an object worthy of public esteem. Is it necessary to dally longer over this thought to feel the delirium it provokes? But one has not such an object to hand every day; yet one is accustomed to play at being a tyrant and would like to be always; very well, one must learn to compensate oneself by other little pleasures; hard-heartedness towards unfortunates, the refusal to relieve them, the action of plunging them oneself into misfortune are in a way substitutes. . . .'¹⁶

This long speech, put into the mouth of a criminal, has several interesting points. The most curious is that passive is supposed to precede active algolagnia. It is also interesting to observe the transition, very cunningly marked and developed, from active algolagnia to destructive Sadism; when from direct sensual satisfaction *Noirceuil* passes to the consideration of the effect such an act would have on other people; until in the last paragraph he reaches completely sexless Sadistic satisfaction.

I have already said that the conception of constructive-destructive Sadism is de Sade's most important contribution to psychology. It has also an extremely wide application. By admitting its existence together with that of sex we get an understandable explanation of a great deal of human behaviour and human misery. It will explain the horrible fact that whenever men get unrestrained power over their fellows – whether in revolution or counter-revolution, in prisons or through their living among races they are allowed to believe inferior – they will practise on their victims the most revolting tortures, and tortures which receive a greater or lesser, and usually greater sexual tinge. And not only does it explain these horrors, it suggests a possible solution; if you can give to all people the education and opportunity for constructive Sadism, you may perhaps do away with the unnecessary miseries that human beings now delight in inflicting on their fellows.

Thirty Years After

I

IN the epilogue which I wrote to the first edition of this book I said 'It is necessary to consider de Sade in three different aspects to be able to pass any sort of judgment about him – as a man, as a writer, and as a thinker.' In the following paragraphs I stated my opinions and judgments as clearly as I could; and for the following eighteen years hardly thought about de Sade as a man or a writer again. It was only when a new edition was mooted for England in 1952 that I once again paid attention to this most singular character, studying the newly available biographical material which gives many revealing details of the man; and a rechecking of the translations and quotations, and a reading of the last two-thirds of *Les 120 Journées de Sodome*, which had been distributed to subscribers some years after the first edition of my book had been published, and which had remained in 'mint condition' over the years, gave an impetus for reconsidering de Sade as a writer.

As a writer I think I very considerably under-rated his qualities thirty years ago. He has no graces of style at all; he abounds in clichés of every sort, and one would have to search hard to find an original metaphor or simile; he writes at such speed that his syntax is frequently inextricably convoluted; and his books have a tendency to proliferate like cancers, burgeoning monstrously, with constant additions but, as far as the evidence of the surviving manuscripts is a guide, with no cuts at all. He writes really badly most of the time, somewhat in the same way as Dickens or Balzac write really badly most of the time; and on one level at least he can be compared to these two writers, and put on a par with the greatest prose writers of any country. In his most typical novels he has created a world of his own as personal and as hallucinating as that of any other great writer: de Sade leaves his unmistakable imprint on the page as clearly as Dickens or Dostoevsky, Balzac or Proust. He is a great creator; and in literature, this is so rare a quality that, when it occurs, the presence or absence of the lesser graces hardly matter at all.

The world which de Sade depicts has not the extent or variety of the worlds of Dickens and Balzac; he is not impressed by the variability of human environments at all, and of human characters only in so far as their hidden desires and lusts differ. Despite some

surface realism, the world he depicts is not an external world at all; it is the internal world of the deep and primitive unconscious, the wishes which human beings have to suppress and forget on their path from infancy to civilized adulthood made real and life-like, acted out on a model of the contemporary world. I do not think that there is a single unconscious wish or fantasy painfully recovered from themselves or their patients by Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, and their numerous associates and followers which is not described as being performed in at least one of de Sade's surviving novels. This by itself is a fantastic feat, for which it would be hard to find any close parallel; working by himself, mostly in complete isolation, de Sade catalogued all the sexual deviations which the next century was to re-list with the aid of numerous clinics and correspondents and elaborate team research; and he rehearsed the rejected dreams which half a century of psychoanalytic research is bringing back into consciousness and which are still so horrifying that continuous attempts are being made to produce the results of psychoanalysis without tapping the wishes and fantasies of infancy and childhood. Unaided, de Sade saw into the deepest abysses of his own soul and recognized the horrors that he found there; he placed these horrors on paper with only such disguise as a semblance to reality demanded, apparently thinking that his readers would have as great courage as he had in recognizing the deepest truths about themselves; and he created a world, or a hell, where all wishes could be realized, where every fantasy of love and hate could be made real, where one received only such punishment as one desired, and where the will, the intellect, the passions and the lusts held undisputed sway. It is a world of unparalleled sombre majesty, of terror and horror unapproached by the Gothic writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth, or pulp writers of the twentieth century. It is the appalling creation of a writer of genius.

II

THERE is very little that can be usefully said about geniuses; the epithet 'genius' can be applied to the works of so few that no generalizations appear applicable to the people who produce these works. It does not, apparently, matter how much or how little we know about their lives; we no more understand Mozart, nearly every day of whose brief life is fully documented, than we understand Shakespeare, concerning whom the certain facts can be written in very few pages. Or, if the comparison with such serene artists gives offence, let us take the politicians of genius. The public life of Hitler is at least as incomprehensible as the public life of Stalin, although we have an enormous array of facts, memoirs, records of the former and an almost complete dearth of trustworthy information about the latter. The facts we know about Mozart, or about Hitler, as individuals are completely inadequate to explain why or how they

created *Don Giovanni* or the Nazi party. On the basis of the available facts we can assign them, with some feelings of assurance, to physiological and psychological categories, suggest that certain early experiences must have been especially influential, that certain pre-occupations or obsessions reappear in their work with some regularity; but when all this analysis has been performed, we are not a whit nearer understanding why this particular kappelmeister's son produced so much and such enchanting melody, or why that customs official's son could dominate and destroy his own country and the greater part of Europe.

If it is made abundantly clear that nothing that can be said about de Sade's character explains the fact that he wrote his books, it is possible to get some notion of the sort of person who wrote them.

The first clear fact about de Sade is that, in the language dear to the students of delinquency, he came from a broken home. The home which was broken was extremely noble and relatively rich – I can think of no other imaginative writer born so near the throne – but the little marquis was shuttled from town to country and back again as inconsequently as a foundling being moved from foster home to foster home. As far as the record shows, he practically never saw his parents, who were away in foreign embassies; and we do not know that there was any adult of either sex who was a constant figure throughout his childhood. As he is moved from Paris to Avignon to Saumanes and back to Paris he seems to change his entire world. He had a tutor, the Abbé Amblet, from the time he was a schoolboy in Paris, who played some part in his subsequent adult life; but there seems to have been no woman who was a constant figure of love and succour.

If de Sade were just a neurotic, this lack could be made to explain a good deal of his subsequent behaviour and attitudes. One would say that he never forgave the mother who abandoned him, and was always trying to take his revenge on maternal figures; and at the same time his ideal of sexual attraction was the cruel woman who hurt, humiliated, and abandoned all who loved her. Thus on the one hand you have the actual ill-treatment of Rose Keller, a woman more than ten years older than the Marquis, and the endless fantasy torture and humiliation of all the pregnant women, all the mothers in all the novels; and on the other hand the humiliations willingly undergone at the hands of the young prostitutes of Marseilles, and the fact that when de Sade writes of the cruel enchantresses of his imagination he writes in the first person, and, since he is writing in French, in the first person feminine.* In *La Nouvelle Justine*

* It is difficult to avoid seeing signs of 'repetition compulsion' in de Sade's adult life, when he is once more destroyed by a 'mother figure', his mother-in-law, Madame de Montreuil; and abandoned by the young enchantress for whose sake he has ruined himself, Mademoiselle de Launay. There is also an interesting parallel between his good wife and her bad sister, and the virtuous Justine and the wicked Juliette.

the misfortunes of the heroine are described in the third person, the pleasures of Juliette in the first person; and the narratives of the four wicked old whores in *Les 120 Journées* were also planned to be written in the first person feminine.

Probably too much weight should not be placed on the fact that an eighteenth-century author writes as a woman in the first person; the example of Richardson, for whom de Sade had so great an admiration, made the practice a very general one. Even in the nineteenth century such popular authors as Dickens and Wilkie Collins wrote large sections of some novels as their heroines in a winsome and wincing style. My impression is, however, that when authors write any sizeable section of their books in the first person of the sex which is not their own they tend to portray, without much disguise, their ideal of the other sex. I do not therefore think it significant that part of de Sade's novels should be written as if recounted and experienced by women; but I do think it revealing that he did *not* write in the first person when describing the misfortunes of Justine. He will not put himself in the position of the Sadist's victim and complement; over five long volumes he will imagine himself the cruel and masterful woman who does not leave alive a single man with whom she had really prolonged contact.

In the numerous attempts which de Sade makes throughout his novels to understand and explain the pleasures of algolagnia, he always gives primacy in time to the enjoyable submission to pain from which the enjoyable infliction of pain is a subsequent derivative. According to contemporary psychoanalytic theory, the sequence is reversed; the desire to inflict pain on the withholding or thwarting parent is primary, and the turning of the pain on the self secondary, a moral development of penance for the cruel wishes.

De Sade acknowledges the cruel wishes without disguise or conscious guilt; but he explains them as a reversal of the pleasure of suffering.

In all his writings de Sade shows himself preoccupied, indeed obsessed, by moral issues; the courses which he advocates must be justified, must be *right*; and all his elaborate mythology of Nature ('the cruel stepmother') is a justification and elaboration of the excuse that by indulging cruel and criminal desires one is following the arcane dictates of Nature, and therefore acting rightly, indeed morally, in the largest philosophical perspective. His political systems are in many ways an elaboration of the Kantian criterion of moral good - 'if everyone could act as I should like to act the world would be a better place'.

De Sade's philosophy, and his view of human nature, can be reduced to a series of apothegms:

- (1) Pleasure is the sign that we are acting in accordance with Nature and with our own nature.

(2) Consequently all acts which give pleasure must be natural and *right*.

(3) A major aim in sexual pleasure is to produce visible and audible changes in the partner.

(4) Any act which produces visible and audible changes in another has a component of sexual pleasure.

(5) Pain tends to produce more marked changes in human beings than does pleasure.

(6) 'I' find that 'I' get intense pleasure from suffering pain inflicted by another, provided the situation is completely under 'my' control. 'I' also find that 'I' get intense pleasure from inflicting pain on others.

(7) 'My' experience leads me to believe that this link between inflicting pain and sexual pleasure is very widespread, if not universal. Most people lack the courage or the power to put their hidden wishes into action; but whenever courageous people acquire power, they will indulge themselves with these pleasures.

(8) It follows that we must expect a world in which power is *always* accompanied by the pleasurable infliction of pain. This is the rule of Nature, and by axiom (2) must be *right*. Any view of the world which ignores man's innate lust for cruelty is therefore necessarily false; in pursuit of the supreme value of Truth such delusions must be exposed and overthrown. Energetic people will always seek power; and the pleasure of power is the ability to produce changes in others. It would be a better world if man's evil heart were recognized and its indulgence permitted but circumscribed.

As was explained above, de Sade always gives temporal priority to suffering pain (sexual masochism) as a precedent to inflicting pain (sexual sadism). It seems possible that this sequence is due to the strength of his moral feelings; and the sequence may well represent his own sexual experiences after puberty, about which we know nothing except that they took place during his army service. And, quite inevitably, de Sade is discussing the post-pubertal development of sexual tastes. Though he considered the sexual constitution, which determined sexual tastes, to be innate, and although he devoted several pages to discussing childish ferocity and destruction, and noted childish shamelessness and exhibitionism, he did not (as far as we know) anticipate the Freudian hypothesis of the infantile sexual life.

Besides the moral components involved in de Sade's sexual masochism, there may also have been a physiological determinant. In a strange, agonized letter to his wife from Vincennes,* he complains of the enormous difficulty he has in achieving physical orgasm and

* First published in a limited edition in 1950, under the title *La Vanille et La Manille*; subsequently republished in *Monsieur le 6* in 1954; both edited by Gilbert Lely.

the great pain which accompanies it: 'It is truly an epileptic attack – and without boring precautions I am sure that people would have suspicions in the Boulevard St. Antoine, convulsions, spasms, agony – you saw some samples at La Coste – it has simply doubled so you can judge what it's like. . . . Imagine a rifle charged with a bullet, a bullet with the quality of growing larger the longer it remains in the rifle; if you shoot after two days, the explosion is a light one, if you let the bullet get big, it will break the rifle when it does come out . . . the crisis is very long with movements and unimaginable convulsions the whole time it is going on.' He closes the letter by asking for medical advice. This painfulness of the orgasm, and the difficulty of achieving it, may well have a basis in a physiological malformation; and the moralization of this pleasurable pain or painful pleasure may have been the starting point of de Sade's moral and sexual masochism.

For the understanding of de Sade as a person this 'moral masochism' needs continual emphasis; for his behaviour between, say, his marriage and his final incarceration in 1778 can bear the interpretation of a continual unconscious search for punishment. He is constantly provoking the punishing authorities (including his mother-in-law) in an almost fool-hardy fashion; although he consciously tries to escape, he always returns again. His courage was equal to any event; but he does seem to have pursued imprisonment with considerable zeal.

I think that it is in the light of this pursuit of punishment or humiliation that we must examine what little we know of de Sade's emotional relationships with other men. He had quasi-professional friendships and correspondence with Italian savants and French actors; at least one abbé, who is nothing more than a name, was a companion in debauchery in his youth, and another, the Abbé Amblet, was his tutor and, it would seem, dependent, from the age of fourteen onwards for many years; but the only men with whom he seems to have been really intimate were his valets or menservants.

Three of these figure largely in his life. Firstly Langlois, who was with him at Arcueil and ran after the escaping Rose Keller with money to try to pacify her; his depositions in the trial are almost too much in character, like a stage manservant. He seems to have pimped for de Sade, and to have had two girls waiting for him when he arrived with Rose Keller. We know little more about him, except that de Sade was paying him a pension, and was still in correspondence with him, twenty-five years later.

Secondly there is Latour, his partner in debauchery at Marseilles, condemned to death with his master at Aix, his attendant during the elopement with Mademoiselle de Launay to Italy, a voluntary prisoner with de Sade in Chambéry, and his companion in the daring escape, after which he disappears from the story. Latour not only pimped for de Sade, he played a very major role in the debaucheries arranged, even to the extent of sodomizing de

employer. He was taller than de Sade, looked older, was pock-marked, and wore some kind of sailor-like livery. At Marseilles de Sade pretended to change roles with Latour, addressing him as *Monsieur le Marquis*, and having himself dubbed with the stage-name of a manservant, *La Fleur*. Now, de Sade was a grand seigneur, at least intermittently conscious of the rights and privileges of his rank which were, in pre-Revolutionary France, very great; when he was angry with his wife he was ready to insist on her very inferior birth, and that of her parents. To make an intimate of a manservant – at least once to change roles with him so that it is the valet who orders the marquis around – suggests a wilful confusion of rank, a desire for humiliation, and gratification from such humiliations.

Finally there is Carteron, usually nicknamed *La Jeunesse*, but also playfully called *Martin Quiros* and other fanciful names. We first hear of him as the companion of Latour in the elopement of 1772; thereafter he is constantly in de Sade's service, or that of his wife (after de Sade's imprisonment) until his death in 1785. He had as permanent mistress the Swiss servant, *Gothon* of the beautiful bottom, who stayed faithfully at *La Coste* when all the rest had left. In Paris, after de Sade's imprisonment, he was nominally in the service of the *Marquise*, but used to be absent for days at a time on his debaucheries; she did not complain because he was 'so devoted'. He acted as de Sade's amanuensis, making fair copies of his manuscripts.

Some correspondence, dating from de Sade's imprisonment, has survived; they are perhaps the most extraordinary letters that de Sade ever wrote, fantastic, humorous, full of verbal inventions, even turning his manic obsessions about 'signals' into jokes; *La Jeunesse* in reply contradicts his master on points of fact and complains that his writing is like a swarm of bees. They do not seem the letters of a nobleman to his employee, but the humorous mock-insulting exchanges of two sworn boon-companions.

These relationships are perhaps somewhat slender bases on which to erect any elaborate interpretation; but at least they are clues; and we have no account of a relationship between de Sade and men of his own rank or intelligence which have anything like their duration or intensity.

These relationships, too, form the only basis for the charge, which some earlier writers levelled against de Sade, that he was an invert, a passive homosexual. On the concrete level there is no basis for this charge; de Sade was a conscientious libertine; he would try everything twice and if he still didn't like it would persevere until he did; the episodes of any one occasion bear witness to the range of his experiments, rather than to a permanent taste. On a psychological level, however, I think there is an element of truth; the only relationship with another man which de Sade found agreeable was one in which he was the 'under-dog.' His letters to people in authority in Revolutionary Paris, like some of his letters to his gaolers and

ministers, show an abject self-humiliation which appears more than formal.

In psychoanalytic typology, de Sade can be described unhesitatingly as a predominantly anal character, or at least as a character with very marked anal traits. His treatment of money is consistently irrational, alternating between excessive extravagance and excessive parsimony; and he is always calculating about money, both in real life, in the endless correspondence with the lawyer Gaufridy and in the novels with his constant checking-up on the state of the principal characters' financial situation; and he understood and noted the connection of some sexual perversions with money – connections of a subtlety which seems to have escaped the sexologists of the nineteenth century, to be rediscovered by the psychoanalysts of the twentieth.

Numbers, as was pointed out in the first chapter, had a permanent fascination for de Sade; when his mind was nearly unbalanced in the despair and uncertainty of the first years of what seemed like life-long imprisonment, his ideas of reference were founded on the belief of a hidden numerical code, the crazy numerology of the 'signals'; and the formal neatness of pattern which distinguishes so much of his work (in particular *Les 120 Journées de Sodome*) depends on numerical symmetry. Typically, too, he was always turning people into things, at least in fantasy, by reducing them to corpses; and his preferred phrase for the forced participants and victims in debauchery is 'objets de luxure' – *objects for lust*. He expressed a continual preference throughout his works, and apparently in his life* for anal intercourse; and among the perversions on which he seems to dwell with particular relish (after his first favourite, flagellation) are coprophagy, inhaling of flatus, anilinctus and closely allied actions. If ever a man could be so described, de Sade can be called a polymorphous pervert; but if the psycho-analytic schema be adopted, de Sade would be described as an anal, rather than an oral, sadist arrested at, or regressed to, the phallic stage.

By the standards of any society of which we have knowledge, de Sade would be considered a sexual pervert. This cannot be denied; but once admitted, the question is raised of how dangerous he was to society as a man (rather than as a writer). All that was ever legally proved against him is that he gave one woman a whipping, and made two others unwell for a few days by feeding them on homosexual pills which were intended to be carminative and aphrodisiac, not poisonous. The disproportion between the punishment – twenty-

* One of the letters to his wife is quite unambiguous on this point. In this context too falls his intermittent addiction to pederasty. Again, in a letter to his wife, he recalls with pleasure the offer of boys by Italian pimps; and the presence of two almost illiterate sixteen-year-old lads as 'secretaries' during two of the siege winters at La Coste suggests that they were hired for this purpose. Their employment might have been legitimate; but it does not seem probable.

seven years' incarceration – and the proved offences is so great that there is a tendency to look upon him as a legal martyr, and to say that his sufferings have taken away from posterity the right to judge him. This sentiment is a generous one, but it is not much help in trying to understand this extraordinary man. Would he have performed (or for that matter, did he perform) those mutilations and tortures and murders on which his mind dwelt so lovingly in later years? Was he a lust-murderer, or would he have been one if he had remained at liberty?

Nobody can give an assured answer, but all the evidence is against such a supposition. As de Sade himself wrote to his wife from Vincennes: * 'I'm a libertine, I admit it; I've imagined everything that could be imagined on that subject, but I certainly have not done, and certainly will never do, all that I have imagined. I am a libertine, but not a *criminal* or a *murderer* . . .' His behaviour during the Terror suggests strongly that he had no tendency to take advantage of the opportunities the political situation offered, and which some other of his compatriots frankly enjoyed; he seems to have been consistently humane and even squeamish.

We still do not know a great deal about his sexual activities during his years of vigour, freedom and wealth; but he had sufficient, and sufficiently powerful, enemies for it to be highly probable that any really serious misdemeanour would have been brought home to him. The rather mysterious police memoranda suggest that he was always addicted to flagellation, both active and passive; and passages in his correspondence, and that of others, suggest that he enjoyed frightening his temporary partner with threats, with automata and other mechanical contraptions, as well as the black room decorated with a purchased skeleton, to which reference was made in the first chapter. In a sexual context, he certainly enjoyed producing fear in his partner by quasi-theatrical settings;† but it seems as if he might have taken his motto from *Hamlet*:

Let me be cruel, not unnatural:
I will speak daggers to her but use none.

The worst that happened to any of the people in his complete power during the siege winters at La Coste was pregnancy; and, in this context, such a fate can hardly be considered worse than death.

* The *grande lettre* in *L'Aigle Mademoiselle* . . ., published by Gilbert Lely in 1949.

† It seems likely that he also enjoyed being frightened himself. In one of his playful letters to his wife (playful, but with sinister undertones of insanity) he suggests that she procure two skulls, and wrap them up in a parcel so that they look like a parcel of provisions from his home in La Coste: 'he'll open them eagerly, see what's inside, and he'll be terribly frightened'.

De Sade probably possessed many of the character-traits which are also found in lust-murderers; but his keen analytical intelligence and his strict conscience almost certainly prevented him ever acting out his homicidal fantasies.

In my re-reading of part of de Sade's work, I have been continually impressed with the strength of his conscience, with the severity of his super-ego, to use a psychoanalytic term that has deeper overtones than the common phrase. Even at his most perverse, even in the great misanthropy and blasphemy of *Les 120 Journées*, even when he is saying with the greatest elaboration the written word has ever witnessed: 'Evil, be Thou my Good,' he is never in the slightest doubt of what is good, what evil. He is no moral imbecile, not even an amoralist like so many of the writers (and people) of the eighteenth century in France. When he taxes writers like Crébillon with immorality because they make the seducers attractive, he is not, I think, being hypocritical; he is making a considered moral judgment. Certainly his male seducers and libertines are, quite intentionally, the most repulsive characters, morally and physically, in European fiction. De Sade seems to have had no delusions about the 'roses and raptures of vice.'

Morally, de Sade was caught in an inextricable dilemma. He could only get adequate relief from his painful sexual tension in situations of subordination or superordination, of playing despot or playing victim; and he did not believe that his sexual constitution was uncommon. But when he was not sexually excited, he was one of the most impassioned partisans of equality between and freedom for all people of either sex. Nearly all his speculative writing is an attempt to reconcile these two contradictory demands. From such evidence as we possess, de Sade's character and ideas remain remarkably consistent in his transitions from wealth to poverty, from freedom to solitary confinement, from monarchy to republic to Empire; and it therefore seems not unlikely that in his years of prosperity and freedom he wrote, or planned, egalitarian tracts or pamphlets or books, as he quite certainly wrote or planned tracts or books, and made copious notes, on the varieties of sexual behaviour. His claims, made in manuscripts finished before the fall of the Bastille, that he was persecuted for his political writings may well have some basis in fact.

III

MENTION was made above of the quasi-theatrical settings with which de Sade hoped to scare his temporary sexual partners. This is one facet of an aspect of his character which seems to call for more prolonged examination: his obsession with the theatre, his constant desire to be an acted dramatist. De Sade can rightly be

described as 'stage-struck'; and the relationship of this obsession with his character and his sexual tastes seems worth exploring.

Let us recall the facts briefly. From the moment that de Sade attained independence as a young aristocrat on the town, the theatre is a constant theme. His first known mistresses were dancers and an actress; almost immediately after his marriage he was occupied with amateur theatricals as actor and writer of epilogues; his earliest (and still unpublished) attempts at writing include a play as well as assorted prologues and epilogues. Almost the first use he made of his wife's dowry was to construct a 'theatre-room' (the inventory of the furnishings survives) at La Coste, in which both amateur and professional actors performed plays of his own writing, as well as other pieces. With his wife and Mademoiselle de Launay, he seems to have given theatrical performances in the neighbouring houses in Provence.

When, in 1780, he gave up hope of release, turned his back on the world, and set about making himself a professional writer, it is as a dramatist that he primarily thinks of himself. In his letters he is constantly asking his wife for the scripts of new plays; in the *catalogue raisonné* of 1788 of works written in the Bastille and Vincennes and ready and fit for publication, pride of place is given to the seventeen plays which were to fill the first two volumes; and much of the lost *Portefeuille d'un Homme de lettres* was occupied with discussions concerning the writing and construction of dramatic works.

When de Sade was released in 1790, he seems to have believed that he would acquire fame and fortune from his dramatic works; and during his ten years of liberty the theatre played a preponderating role in his life. One play, *Oxtiern*, was produced and published, though with little success; he was constantly bombarding theatre managers and actors with his scripts and letters urging reasons why his plays should be performed; his best friends were apparently actors, his last devoted mistress, Constance Quesnet, was an actress. His last months of liberty and extreme poverty were passed at Versailles, where he had some menial job at the local theatre and where he played the part of the innkeeper in a revival of *Oxtiern*. When he was placed in 'preventive detention' in the lunatic asylum at Charenton, he produced plays, including his own, with the patients filling at least the greater number of the roles (professional actors seem to have come out from Paris on occasion); when members of the public were invited, he acted as master of ceremonies, and composed *vers d'occasion* to be recited or sung to welcome the most noteworthy guests. Almost his last surviving letter, dating from the year before his death, was a final vain appeal to the Théâtre Français to act his patriotic play *Jeanne Laisné*.

We know nothing of de Sade's talents as an actor or producer — there are no contemporary records; but we do know about his qualities as a playwright for, besides the one play which was

published in his life-time, the manuscripts of most of the others, including his favourite *Jeanne Laisné*, survive in the possession of the Marquis Xavier de Sade; they have been examined, and short excerpts from them published, by Gilbert Lely. Even Lely cannot find a good word to say for them, cannot bring himself to publish one in its entirety, even in non-permanent form, as a piece of documentation; they are outstandingly dull, flat and unprofitable, with no apparent merit beyond facility, with practically no original, and certainly no 'shocking' ideas.

Their very badness, however, is interesting. Why did de Sade so persistently overrate them, so continuously press for the performance? Why did he think of himself as a playwright, rather than as a novelist? Besides his clandestine publications and manuscripts, and the semi-disavowed first version of *Justine*, he had openly published *Aline et Valcour* – a novel of considerable, if unrecognized, merits – and *Les Crimes de l'Amour*; these works are serious and worthy of being taken seriously, whereas his plays are not; but de Sade never seems to have suspected this disparity.

I should like to suggest that the reason for de Sade's continuous preoccupation with the theatre, and his failure to recognize his own incapacity as a dramatist, lies in the fact that, on a fairly abstract level, there is a close connection between theatricality and true Sadism. What does a successful playwright or actor do? By his skills, he commands the emotions of his audience, makes them laugh or cry, shudder or exult, as he plans; he produces visible and audible changes in the people who are under his spell. But, in a crude and concrete way, this is precisely what a sadist wishes to do to his victims; in a greater number of cases one might say that the sadist is acting out a play with an audience of one.

Perhaps I had better state immediately and emphatically that I do not intend to imply that actors or dramatists are sexual sadists, either overtly or unconsciously; at the most, I am implying that some of the same psychological mechanisms are involved in both situations – to anticipate a little, that Sadists are failed actors and playwrights. I do, however, recall that, when there was a season of Grand Guignol in London in the twenties, an actress as saintly and dedicated as Sybil Thorndyke was reported in the newspapers as exulting in the number of people in the audience who had fainted from horror.

It is of course with the Grand Guignol, the theatre of blood and horror, that the connection with sadism becomes most obvious. But apart from some plots dealing with apparent, or ignored, incest, de Sade had no such elements in his plays; the Grand Guignol aspect was reserved for his private stage-settings. I think it is possible, too, to discern something of stage-setting, of a search for the *coup de théâtre*, in some episodes of the two public scandals, particularly the treatment of Rose Keller.

The novels, particularly the clandestine ones, have a great number

of theatrical elements: *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, a large part (it would seem) of the lost *Journées de Florbelle* and the *Dialogue entre un Prêtre et un Moribond* are all written as plays, though with elaborate stage-directions. In the narrative novels the settings are frequently described as though they were stage-sets, designed by themselves to produce an emotional effect; and there is an endless elaboration in them of fancy dress, of *tableaux vivants*, of set-pieces and pantomime, of all the paraphernalia of amateur dramatics. The sexologists tell us that a quasi-theatrical acting-out of a scene chosen by the client is very frequent in the perverse practices of many employers of prostitutes.

If I am right in thinking that some sort of theatricality or dramatic ritual was a constant component in de Sade's sexual sado-masochism, then it perhaps becomes understandable why he could never admit his incapacity as a professional dramatist. If he could have been a successful playwright, then he would have been able to achieve in a socially acceptable way many of the pleasures which he could otherwise obtain only from dangerously unsocial acts.

As a man (as opposed to the writer), de Sade is important as a paradigm. Except in his honesty, and his easy access to his deepest unconscious, there is no reason to think him unique. Despite the efforts of the psychoanalysts, we still know very little of the reasons which make artistic creation so imperative for some people. With its reductionary, historical approach to human development, psychoanalysis tends to explain artistic creation as the successful sublimation of repressed infantile sexual or aggressive drives; a psychoanalytic explanation of de Sade's failure as a dramatist might well be that his repressions were not strong enough, that he 'acted out' too much.

Another interpretation seems to me possible. It seems possible that the mysterious drive for creativity is very primitive in some individuals – recall the reported responses of the infant Mozart to the first hearing of a trumpet; and that, when this drive for creativity is thwarted, either by technical incapacity or public indifference, there is a 'back-formation' to more direct sado-masochism. I suggest that sado-masochism may be, in some cases, a substitute for creativity, rather than that creativity is purely a sublimation of repressed infantile drives. Had Mussolini been a successful dramatist, or Hitler a successful architect, the history of this century might have been very different.

IV

DE SADE would be an important precursor of contemporary political science if he had done nothing more than raise the question of the connection between an individual's lusts and his political beliefs and actions.

All political philosophies of the nineteenth century from Bentham to Marx, from Proudhon to Gladstone followed the Founding Fathers of the United States and the Encyclopédistes of France in assuming that man's political actions and preferences were determined by conscious and rational choice of advantage or disadvantage, profit or loss, justice or injustice, class interest or class warfare. It was never assumed that political attitudes might be the resultants from unconscious desires or that deep non-rational satisfactions could be found in political activities. This is one of the reasons why none of the nineteenth-century political philosophies dealt satisfactorily with the problems connected with desire for power, the self-selection of people seeking power, the optimum of power in a state and so on. Only with Pareto was the irrationality of mankind treated as a relevant variable of political science; and only after the First World War, when political scientists learned the concepts of psychoanalysis (for example, Harold Lasswell in his *Psychopathology and World Politics*) were the questions once more raised which de Sade had asked nearly a century and a half earlier.

De Sade's stringent egalitarian morality made him decide that all people who seek or acquire power were evil; the political aspects of his work could be viewed as a gleeful documentation of Acton's famous apothegm that 'All power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely'; and he portrays the corruption of power in the most concrete, revolting and gory detail. The object of power, he states, is pleasure in the exercise of power; and the exercise of power, he would agree with George Orwell* or Lasswell and Kaplan† consists in the possibility of applying severe sanctions (death, torture, deprivation) to those under power. Since he lacked the psychological concept of the unconscious, de Sade could only illustrate the hidden desires of power-holders by writing as if they were fully acted out; but with that proviso apart, no European writer, to my knowledge, has penetrated more deeply into the destructive motives of those who seek or hold power. What he ignored was the desire to make restitution which, on an unconscious level, can counterbalance the desire to apply severe sanctions; and consequently he could not conceive the possibility of a good, or tolerable, government; when he abandoned the hope of Utopia he really fell back on complete anarchy. But the fact that his powers of analysis were much stronger than his powers of construction should not blind us to the fact that these powers of analysis were extraordinary for the epoch, and, had they been consistently taken into account when they were first written, a great number of the disappointments and confusions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries might well have been avoided.

Psychologically one of the most important aspects of de Sade's thinking is the question which he raises of the connection of the will

* *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 264. (Secker and Warburg 1949)

† *Power and Society*, p. 74. (Yale University Press 1950).

and the emotions. The will is perhaps the major casualty of contemporary psychological systems; it is a concept which plays at best a minor role in psychoanalytic thought, and none at all in the different behaviourist or gestalt or topological systems. For de Sade the will ranks with the imagination and the lusts as the determinants of human behaviour.

In de Sade's implicit psychology, the lusts are innate, dependent on constitution only; people are born with a certain physique and with certain tastes through which alone they can get complete gratification. This question of physique and innate tastes is outside all voluntary control and is not, by de Sade, connected with heredity; it is the endowment given by Nature to the newborn and is ineluctable; the only problem is whether people who are born with strange tastes will have the courage to carry them out, or the imagination to discover them.

De Sade uses the concept of imagination to link together a number of psychological activities which modern psychology keeps separate. At moments it is almost like Spearman's 'g', the quality which separates the intelligent from the unintelligent; it is also controlled fantasy or, as this is sometimes called, planning; and occasionally it gets very close to the Freudian concept of the unconscious or pre-conscious, when the imagination 'suggests' or 'proposes' actions which had not been consciously envisaged. In one remarkable passage, which unfortunately cannot be fully reproduced, de Sade endows the imagination with autonomous activity, very similar to the Freudian unconscious; and in a footnote to this passage de Sade claims that the author has tried the advice he gives. Juliette is advising the Princess Borghese how to discover her true desires:

For a whole fortnight abstain from all sexual activity; distract yourself and amuse yourself with other things; but for fourteen days don't even admit a licentious idea. At the end of that period lie down alone, calmly, in silence and in the deepest darkness; and there recollect all the ideas you have banished during the period. . . . Give your imagination the freedom to present you, by gradation, different sorts of perversions; examine them all in detail, pass them in review one after the other; convince yourself that the whole earth is yours . . . that you have the right to alter, mutilate, destroy, overturn everything and everyone you desire. You have nothing to fear there; choose that which gives you pleasure, but don't make any exceptions, don't suppress anything; have no qualms about anyone at all; don't let any relationship hold you back; let no rein restrain you; leave all the costs of the experience to your imagination. . . . Without your noticing it, one out of the different pictures which you have made pass in front of you will hold your attention more tenaciously than the others, and with such a force that you can neither push it aside nor

replace it by another. The idea which you have acquired in the way I have explained will dominate and captivate you; delirium will seize your senses. . . . Immediately after, light your candles once more, and inscribe on your tablets the sort of wildness which has just inflamed you, without forgetting a single one of the circumstances which can have accentuated the details; then go to sleep, reread your notes the next morning, and, as you rework it add anything which your somewhat blasé imagination can suggest to you which is capable of increasing the irritation. Now make an essay out of this idea and when you are writing up the finished version, add once more all the episodes that your intelligence may suggest. Now do what you have imagined, and you will discover that that is the perversion which is most fitted to you, and which you will execute with the maximum of pleasure.¹

Apart from the content of this passage, it is worth noting the strange interrelationship of the will and the imagination. It is through the will that the imagination is set out on its course, and given the desired direction; but then at a given moment the imagination takes over, and momentarily overpowers the will: 'you can neither push the imagined picture aside nor replace it by another.' Then once more the will must take over to keep in consciousness and on record the discovery that the imagination has made; the intelligence, the head, gives further elaboration; but it is the imagination, assisted by the will, which has performed the act of creation.

Sadism, as described in the previous chapter, could be defined as the pleasure derived from the activity of the will; and the most obvious link between active and passive algolagnia, between clinical sadism and clinical masochism, is that the situation is under the control of the person taking his or her pleasure, that the other participants are fulfilling the will of the pleasure-seeker, whether they do this by submitting to or inflicting ill treatment. It is because he linked the will and the passions, the head and the genitals, that de Sade made his unique contribution to the literature of psychology and the psychology of literature. De Sade was, as I hope has been demonstrated, a precursor of many of the important ideas and scientific disciplines of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; our scientists have come abreast of, and indeed surpassed, much of his thought; but they have not yet produced a dynamic psychology which will link the will and the passions in a systematic manner.

V

To what extent are de Sade's psychological concepts universal, applicable to people of every culture and every period of history, and to what extent are they limited to certain times and places -

say, eighteenth-century France, or post-Reformation Europe, or the Western World, or Christendom?

The evidence is inadequate to give any really conclusive answers; but a few generalizations can be made with an adequate degree of assurance.

Active algolagnia, the direct and contemporaneous linking of sexual excitement and the infliction of, or submission to, physical pain has been reported from very few societies outside the Greco-Romano-Byzantine tradition, outside Europe or countries populated by people originating in Europe. In some of the Japanese and Chinese erotic fictions, perhaps particularly *Golden Lotus*, there are passages which could be interpreted as the enhancement of pleasure derived from the concomitant presence of pain; but, as far as my recollection goes, there are no similar suggestions in Arabian or Hindu erotic literatures or handbooks. Similarly, when the shocked missionaries reported on the 'nameless orgies' of Africa and Oceania, they do not seem to have included flagellation or similar practices in their indictments. Some of the mutilations practised in some of the tribes of the further islands of Indonesia may have had erotic algolagnic functions but the practices are not widespread. Negative evidence must always be used with the greatest caution – the absence of reporting does not necessarily imply that the practice was not there to be reported – but, as a sexual perversion, it seems as though algolagnia were confined to, at most, two areas of the world.

Cruelty, of course, is far more widely distributed – de Sade combed travel books and histories for examples from all peoples and periods – but it is worth questioning whether cruelties which, if inflicted by an Occidental could be taken as *prima facie* evidence for Sadistic characters, should be so considered when the inflictor has not been brought up in the Occidental tradition.

Although Occidentals of the twentieth century are killing and maiming more people in more horrible ways than any previously recorded group, as individuals we tend to be extremely sensitive to the sight or sound of another's suffering, and react to it with guilt or pleasure or a mixture of both. This sensitivity would appear to be very much less strong among the peoples of some other societies; and indifference to the sight and sounds of suffering which would be cruel if displayed by Occidentals, may perhaps be better described as *callousness* in other cases.

A situation for which we have quite a lot of comparable data is the treatment of prisoners, whether prisoners of war or political prisoners. In a great number of cases Germans seem to have treated their political prisoners, and prisoners of war not protected by the Geneva convention, in Sadistic fashion, inflicting pain or humiliation on the helpless for the immediate pleasure of the tormentor. Nearly all the reports of prisoners formerly in the hands of the Soviets stress on the contrary the almost complete absence of personal animosity and personal cruelty. The prisoners suffer a great

deal from overwork and undernourishment, fatigue and lack of medical care, bad living conditions and overstrain, so that in some situations they died like flies; the gaolers appear callous concerning such human misery, but they do not appear to get pleasure from it; and once a prisoner is admitted to be ill or in need of succour he is likely to be treated with considerable tenderness and care.

With the Japanese the situation is more complicated. As I noted earlier, it is possible that the Japanese link erotic pleasure and suffering on a concrete level, and they are very conscious of the rights and duties of different statuses and are alert to notice and punish any lack of the respect they consider their due. But in their case too, a lot of what seemed to us cruelty to their prisoners of war can probably be considered callousness, together with a failure to recognize that a diet which was adequate for a Japanese was near starvation for an Occidental and that it was torture for Occidentals to attempt hard physical labour in such a condition of undernourishment. But besides this callousness, there are reports of behaviour by Japanese soldiers, for example at the rape of Nanking or in jungle camps of New Guinea, which would be interpreted as the crudest Sadism if performed by Occidentals.

These scenes of Japanese cruelty to prisoners, however, differ in one important aspect from similar scenes reported from Europe or America. In Europe or America, even in Nazi concentration camps, there is a tendency for the grossest scenes of cruelty to be performed without witnesses other than the victim, the torturer, and his or her accomplices; the Japanese scenes however are reported as being enacted before a large and apparently impassive audience. There is some evidence for supposing that these audiences are an essential component of the situation; and that the Japanese torturer is demonstrating his manliness to his companions by showing his ability to inflict pain without flinching. If this hypothesis is correct, the victim is secondary and his pains mediate. The important relationship is between the actor and the spectators, and the actor earns their admiration by what he can bear to do to the victim. The exhibition is, to a certain degree, Sadistic; but the pleasures sought are not libidinal but social, the approval of one's fellows for one's virility.

This interpretation is rendered the more likely in that the obverse, the exhibiting to an admiring audience the amount of pain one can suffer without flinching as a proof of virility is very fully documented. Besides the initiation rites reported from all over the world in which the stoical endurance of the postulants is an essential feature, there are societies like those of the Plains Indians of North America in which captured prisoners were slowly tortured to death (often by the women) and the greatest admiration went to the tortured prisoner who died impassive, with a song on his lips. The same societies invented the sun dance, in which young braves tear their breast muscles slowly and painfully away to prove to the on-

lookers that they merit their title, that they are manly. Here again the relationship between the sufferer and the spectators is primary, and the pain, as it were, incidental. Here too, the rewards sought are social, rather than libidinal.

In a fashion which is still somewhat obscure, it seems as though many of the inhabitants of the areas where the American Indian formerly roamed have taken over from the people they displaced this demonstration of manliness by the endurance of pain and humiliation without flinching, and the admiration of the spectators who witness the hero's agonies and impassivity. This is a recurrent theme in American literature, from *Billy Budd* to *From Here to Eternity*, a theme which is incomprehensible to most European critics, who interpret as Sadism the quite inevitable accounts of the hero's pains. Few books in recent years have been so strongly reviled in the English press as James Jones' *From Here to Eternity*: for English readers this demonstration of Manliness by Suffering was brutal and obscene. No English writer could ever have written:

There was a satisfaction that came from having borne pain that nothing else could ever quite equal, even though the pain was philosophically pointless and never affected anything but the nervous system. Physical pain was its own justification.*

Perhaps it would be more correct to say that no English (and I suspect no French) writer could have written such sentences in a book intended for general circulation and serious consideration; such sentences might of course occur in the erotic algolagnic literature of the nineteenth century; indeed from the few excerpts available, it would seem that this might be the theme of Swinburne's monumental obsession with schoolboy punishments, *The Flogging Block*.

The point of this rather long digression is to suggest that on the conscious, pre-conscious, and probably unconscious levels there are more and different relationships between suffering pain, inflicting pain, or watching others perform either or both of these actions than those divined by de Sade or posited by the greater number of psychoanalysts. Similarly, there are a few societies described by anthropologists in which de Sade's analysis of political power and power-seekers would appear not to apply, simple subsistence societies like the Arapesh or Lepchas, or 'steady' societies with some hereditary castes like the Balinese.† In these societies positions of authority appear to be quite genuinely avoided so that sanctions have to exist to make those designated exercise the necessary functions.

* James Jones, *From Here to Eternity*, p. 514. (London, Collins 1952).

† Arapesh: see especially Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament*, 1935.

Lepchas: see especially Geoffrey Gorer, *Himalayan Village*, 1938.

Balinese: see especially Gregory Bateson, *Bali: The Value System of a Steady State*, 1951, and Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, *Balinese Character*, 1942.

Human variability, it would seem, has evolved societies where Sadistic characters can achieve no satisfactions and where political power is reduced to a minimum; such societies would seem to be all small and isolated.

Although there may be areas in the world, or periods in history, to which de Sade's observations are not applicable, common observation and a cursory reading of the newspapers will show that his insights are directly applicable to the vast majority of contemporary civilized societies. By the standards of almost any known society de Sade was in some ways a bad man, for some of his life nearly a mad man, and always a profoundly sad man; but his courage and his uncompromising honesty, his conscience and questioning intelligence are so outstanding that both as a writer and as a thinker he still has important messages for those capable of understanding him, and who can read him without danger; and he must still be pursued and suppressed by authorities everywhere, because he remains the arch-critic of authority, human or divine.

Bibliography

THE only purpose of this bibliography is to list those editions of the works of the Marquis de Sade that I have used, so that my references may be checked. A complete list of de Sade's works, published and unpublished, is contained as an appendix to the second volume of Gilbert Lely's *Vie du Marquis de Sade*; this volume also contains excerpts from his political pamphlets, his unpublished plays, and various minor literary works. A number of these were published in the first place in various magazines and journals by Maurice Heine; these have now been gathered together in a single volume. The books of Guillaume Apollinaire and C. R. Dawes also have elaborate bibliographies, mentioning several editions of the major works. Bibliographical details of all these books are given in the introduction. To the best of my knowledge, all of de Sade's published work is included in the following list, which is arranged in approximate order of composition.

1. *Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*. Written in 1782. Edited by Maurice Heine. Paris: Stendhal et Cie., 1926.

2. *Historiettes, Contes et Fabliaux*. Written before 1788. Edited by Maurice Heine. (Paris: Simon Kra, 1927.) This collection consists of twenty-five stories of various length intended partly to be included in the abandoned project of *Contes et Fabliaux d'un Troubadour Provençal du XVIIIème siècle* and partly in the lost *Portefeuille d'un Homme de Lettres*.

3. *Les 120 Journées de Sodome ou L'Ecole du Libertinage*. Written August and September 1785. Edited by Maurice Heine. Paris: Stendhal et Cie., 1931-1937, 3 vols.

4. *Les Infortunes de la Vertu*. Written in June and July 1787. This is the first draft of *Justine*, and was not intended by de Sade for publication. Edited by Maurice Heine. Paris: Editions Fourcades, 1930.

5. *Justine, ou les Malheurs de la Vertu*. Written 1788, first published 1791. Paris: Le Soleil Noir, 1950. Preface by Georges Bataille.

6. *Aline et Valcour ou le Roman Philosophique*. Written before 1788. First published 1795. Brussels: J. J. Gay, 1833, 4 volumes.

7. *Oxtiern ou Les Malheurs du Libertinage*. Play, acted in 1791. First published 1801. Paris: Palimugre, 1948.

8. *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*. First published 1795. My copy is an undatable reprint, badly printed on poor paper in two volumes, of 206 and 247 pages respectively. In Volume I, Dialogue I starts on p. 9; Dialogue II, p. 27; Dialogue III, p. 30; and Dialogue IV, p. 188. Volume I opens with Dialogue V (the pamphlet, *Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains*, occupying pp. 83-179); Dialogue VI starts p. 202, and Dialogue VII, p. 209.

9. *La Nouvelle Justine*. First published 1797. My copy is undatable, but probably early, since the author's name is not on the frontispiece, and eighteenth-century spelling is employed. The pagination is the same as the first edition. Four volumes.

10. *Juliette ou les Prospérités du Vice*. First published 1797. My copy is probably a nineteenth- or twentieth-century reprint, since the author's name is printed on the frontispiece, and the spelling modernized. The pagination is the same as the first edition. Six volumes.

11. *Les Crimes de l'Amour*. First published 1800, 4 volumes. I have never examined this original edition, which consists of the preface, *Idée sur les Romans*, and eleven long short stories of a heroic or tragic nature. However, I possess two compilations under this title. The first, published in Brussels by Gay et Doucé in 1881, contains *L'Idée sur les Romans*, *L'Auteur des Crimes de l'Amour à Villterque*, folliculaire (a pamphlet against a critic of *Les Crimes de l'Amour*) and the story *Juliette et Raunai*. This is the volume to which I refer in the references as *Les Crimes de l'Amour*. A second volume, under the same title, was published in Paris by J. J. Pauvert in 1953. This contains the preface, the pamphlet, and three of the stories, *Faxelange*, *Eugénie de Franval*, and *Dorgeville*. A volume entitled *Ernestine* (Paris: Cabinet du Livre, 1926) contains the title story and *La Double Épreuve*. *L'Oeuvre du Marquis de Sade* (edited by Guillaume Apollinaire 1909) contains *Miss Henriette Stralson*. There are consequently four of the stories I have never seen.

12. *Cahiers Personnels 1803-1804*. Edited by Gilbert Lely. Paris: Corrêa, 1953.

13. *La Marquise de Gange*. First published 1813. Edited by Gilbert Lely. Paris: Pierre Amiot, 1957.

14. *Histoire Secrète d'Isabelle de Bavière*. Written in 1813. Published for the first time by Gilbert Lely. Paris: Gallimard 1953.

Two other items may be mentioned as curiosities: *Zoloé et ses deux acolytes*, first published in 1801, and ascribed to de Sade from 1867 until 1957, when Gilbert Lely decided, on convincing evidence, that there were no grounds in ascribing this feeble anti-Buonaparte satire to de Sade. Second, *L'Affaire Sade* by Maurice Garçon (Paris. J-J Pauvert 1957), which contains the account of the prosecution of the

publisher for putting out a limited edition of de Sade's complete works. Testimony in favour of de Sade was given by Georges Bataille, André Breton, Jean Cocteau and Jean Paulhan.

The different collections and editions of de Sade's correspondence and of the biographies prior to Gilbert Lely are listed in the Introduction.

References

INTRODUCTION

1. Juliette, III, 97.
2. Aline et Valcour, I, xiii.

1 - LIFE

1. Aline et Valcour, I, 25
2. Historiettes, Contes et Fabliaux, 187.
3. Historiettes, Contes et Fabliaux, 180.
4. Historiettes, Contes et Fabliaux, 166.
5. Historiettes, Contes et Fabliaux, 183.
6. Aline et Valcour, IV, 220-1.
7. Juliette, IV, 297.
8. Aline et Valcour, I, 42.
9. Historiettes, Contes et Fabliaux, 213.

2 - LITERARY WORK

1. Les Crimes de l'Amour, 114 (*see bibliography*)
2. Les Crimes de l'Amour, 119.
3. Les Crimes de l'Amour, 123.
4. Les Crimes de l'Amour, 134.
5. Les Crimes de l'Amour, 143.
6. Historiettes, Contes et Fabliaux, 105.
7. Historiettes, Contes et Fabliaux, 141.
8. 120 Journées de Sodome, 75.
9. 120 Journées de Sodome, first paragraph.
10. 120 Journées de Sodome, 35.
11. La Nouvelle Justine, IV, 172.

12. 120 Journées de Sodome, 196.
13. 120 Journées de Sodome, 10.
14. 120 Journées de Sodome, 51.
15. 120 Journées de Sodome, 301-2.
16. 120 Journées de Sodome, 75.
17. Juliette, III, 98.
18. Les Crimes de l'Amour, 47.

3 - PHILOSOPHY

1. Facts derived from the preface by Maurice Solovine to *L'Homme Machine* in the collection *Les Chefs d'Œuvre Méconnus*.
2. La Nouvelle Justine, II, 28.
3. Juliette, IV, 269-71.
4. Juliette, I, 78-9.
5. Juliette, I, 80.
6. Juliette, I, 81.
7. Juliette, III, 138-41.

4 - GOD AND NATURE

1. Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond, 47.
2. La Nouvelle Justine, I, 174.
3. Juliette, IV, 269-71.
4. Juliette, II, 188.
5. Juliette, V, 243.
6. Juliette, I, 82.
7. Juliette, III, 267 and Philosophie dans le Boudoir, II, 98.
8. Juliette, I, 83.
9. Juliette, II, 289-337.
10. Aline et Valcour, III, 71.
11. La Nouvelle Justine, IV, 240.
12. Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond, sub fin.; 120 Journées de Sodome, 75; Aline et Valcour, III, 258; La Nouvelle Justine, IV, 63.
13. Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond, 56; Juliette, I, 90.
14. Juliette, IV, 306-10

15. Aline et Valcour, II, 61.
16. Juliette, I, 17.
17. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 15.
18. Aline et Valcour, II, 69.
19. Juliette, VI, 212.
20. Juliette, I, 203.
21. La Nouvelle Justine, IV, 4-6.

5 - POLITICS I - DIAGNOSIS

1. Aline et Valcour, II, 190; Philosophie dans le Boudoir, II, 123; Infortunes de la Vertu, 35; Juliette, V, 242.
2. La Nouvelle Justine, IV, 277-90.
3. Aline et Valcour, III, 211.
4. Juliette, I, 210.
5. Juliette, I, 204-7.
6. Juliette, III, 126-31.
7. Juliette, II, 199.
8. Juliette, IV, 227.
9. Juliette, I, 368.
10. Aline et Valcour, IV, 226.
11. Juliette, V, *passim*.
12. Juliette, II, 190.
13. Infortunes de la Vertu, 52.
14. Aline et Valcour, II, 89.
15. Aline et Valcour, II, 126.
16. Aline et Valcour, II, 188.
17. Juliette, IV, 7.
18. Crimes de l'Amour, 25.
19. Aline et Valcour, III, 413.
20. Philosophie dans le boudoir, II, 164.
21. La Nouvelle Justine, I, 104.
22. Juliette, V, 227.
23. Aline et Valcour, II, 84.
24. Aline et Valcour, III, 119-24.
25. Ernestine, 5.
26. Aline et Valcour, II, 202 and 244.

27. Juliette, I, 183.
28. Juliette, III, 5.
29. 120 Journées, 193; see also Juliette, I, 212.
30. Juliette, II, 123-5.
31. Juliette, II, 130.
32. Philosophie dans le boudoir, I, 79.
33. Presentiments Juliette, VI, 51, 108; La Nouvelle Justine, II, 351; Clairvoyance Juliette, III, 220; (La Durand is psychic); Dowsing Juliette, VI, 143; Phantasms of the living in the stories *Le Serpent* and *Le Revenant* in *Historiettes, Contes et Fabliaux*.
34. La Nouvelle Justine, I, 75; Infortunes de la Vertu, 35.
35. La Nouvelle Justine, IV, 308.
36. Juliette, I, 317.
37. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, II, 181-4.
38. Aline et Valcour, IV, 5.
39. Aline et Valcour, II, 255.
40. Infortunes de la Vertu, 30; La Nouvelle Justine, I, 68.
41. Aline et Valcour, II, 249.
42. Juliette, IV, 238.
43. Juliette, IV, 238.
44. Aline et Valcour, I, 81.
45. Infortunes de la Vertu, 174.
46. Aline et Valcour, I, 146.
47. Juliette, I, 218.
48. Aline et Valcour, IV, 6.
49. Juliette, IV, 8.
50. Aline et Valcour, III, 412.
51. Aline et Valcour, II, 247.
52. Aline et Valcour, II, 250.
53. Aline et Valcour, II, 238-41.
54. Aline et Valcour, II, 234 and La Nouvelle Justine, I, 104.
55. Aline et Valcour, II, 261.
56. Aline et Valcour, II, 262.
57. Aline et Valcour, II, 235.
58. Aline et Valcour, II, 276.
59. Aline et Valcour, II, 276.
60. Aline et Valcour, II, 230-80.
61. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, II, 174.
62. Aline et Valcour, II, 246-59.

63. Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond, 52.
64. Aline et Valcour, II, 205.
65. Juliette, V, 119.
66. Juliette, V, 115-22.
67. Aline et Valcour, II, 220; Juliette, I, 118-20; Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 88.
68. Juliette, I, 132-3; Philosophie dans le Boudoir, II, 131.
69. Historiettes, Contes et Fabliaux, 243.
70. Aline et Valcour, II, 88; Juliette, VI, 217.
71. Aline et Valcour, II, 49.
72. Historiettes, Contes et Fabliaux, 282.
73. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 88; Aline et Valcour, II, 206.
74. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, II, 170.
75. Aline et Valcour, II, 57-157.

6 - *POLITICS II - SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS*

1. Aline et Valcour, II, 164-320.
2. Aline et Valcour, III, 245-50.
3. Juliette, IV, 234-42.
4. Juliette, VI, 212.
5. Aline et Valcour, IV, 115.
6. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, II, 83-179.

7 - *SEX, PLEASURE and LOVE*

1. Juliette, I, 111.
2. Aline et Valcour, II, 56.
3. Juliette, IV, 73.
4. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 7.
5. Juliette, II, 178.
6. 120 Journées de Sodome, 91, ff.
7. Aline et Valcour, III, 139-40.
8. La Nouvelle Justine, III, 309.
9. Juliette, I, 114.
10. La Nouvelle Justine, II, 212.
11. 120 Journées de Sodome, 102 and 142.

12. La Nouvelle Justine, IV, 192.
13. Juliette, I, 201.
14. Juliette, IV, 130.
15. La Nouvelle Justine, III, 292.
16. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, II, 34-7.
17. 120 Journées de Sodome, 154 and 169.
18. 120 Journées de Sodome, *passim*.
19. Juliette, VI, 94.
20. Juliette, II, 96, see also La Nouvelle Justine, II, 209, 225.
21. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 120.
22. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 126-7.
23. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 104.
24. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 93.
25. Juliette, V, 82.
26. Juliette, I, 260.
27. Juliette, I, 361.
28. Juliette, IV, 18.
29. Aline et Valcour, IV, 290.
30. 120 Journées de Sodome, 193.
31. Juliette, III, 171-2.
32. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 54-6.
33. Juliette, II, 79-82.
34. L'Aigle, Mademoiselle . . . 25.

8 - SADISM and ALGOLAGNIA

1. Aline et Valcour, IV, 149.
2. Infortunes de la Vertu, 154.
3. Juliette, VI, 294-5.
4. Juliette, III, 4-16.
5. Juliette, IV, 199.
6. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 170.
7. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, II, 192.
8. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 182.
9. La Nouvelle Justine, IV, 288-90.
10. 120 Journées de Sodome, 5, 14, 58.
11. La Nouvelle Justine, III, 172.
12. 120 Journées de Sodome, 326-8.

13. Juliette, VI, 197.
14. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 175-6.
15. Philosophie dans le Boudoir, I, 178-9.
16. Juliette, II, 94-102; see also La Nouvelle Justine, II, 213-20.

9 - THIRTY YEARS AFTER

1. Juliette, IV, 68-70.

QUARTET

de Sade 3/6

Four tales by the master himself.

The Mystified Magistrate
with cynical wit describes
the difficulties of a dirty old man
attempting to consummate his marriage
to a reluctant girl.

Augustine de Villeblanche
recounts the downfall of a lesbian
who masquerades as a man and is
herself seduced by the trickery
of her suitor.

Miss Henrietta Stralson
takes a sardonic look at the attempts
of a degenerate English lord to debauch
an unwilling girl.

Retaliation
by a young wife who discovers
that her husband is unfaithful to her –
with a nun! Quite by chance there is a
local priest who very much admires the wife:
a handsome, very amorous, priest . . .

'The stories are all scandalous'
Sunday Times

ELIZABETH BOWEN IN PANTHER MODERN FICTION

'Miss Bowen is one of the best living writers'
Lord David Cecil in The Sunday Times

THE LITTLE GIRLS 5/-

It reveals in subtly dramatic fashion the forces of malice and violence within the female psyche.

'Written with great brilliance and wit'
The Listener

'Assuredly a work of art, full of insight into the stranger reaches of feminine psychology'
The Guardian

A WORLD OF LOVE 3/6

'A hot June and moments close to the quick of living'

Arthur Calder-Marshall

'The enchantment is almost sensuous'
The Tablet

'The novelist of the heightened moments of life'

V. S. Pritchett

DORIS LESSING IN PANTHER MODERN FICTION

'For sheer poise I don't think there has been
a writer to touch her since Jane Austen'

John Wain in The Observer

MARTHA QUEST 5/-

A PROPER MARRIAGE 5/-

A RIPPLE
FROM THE STORM 5/-

LANDLOCKED 5/-

(The above novels are the first four titles of
novel sequence, *Children of Violence*.)

WINTER IN JULY 3/6

THE HABIT OF LOVING 5/-

'Furious talent which at times amounts to genius'

The Sunday Times

'I am no longer in any doubt whatsoever that
Mrs. Lessing is one of the best writers in England'

Pamela Hansford Johnson

'Portrays modern woman in all her complexity'

Literary Horizons

*A list of
famous authors
published in
Panther Books
appears overleaf*

**Famous authors in
Panther Books**

Henry Miller	Henry Williamson
Norman Mailer	Vladimir Nabokov
Maurice Procter	Fernando Henriques
Jean-Paul Sartre	John O'Hara
Jean Genet	Howard Fast
Alan Moorehead	Hubert Monteilhet
Nicholas Monsarrat	Julian Mitchell
Colin Willock	Agnar Mykle
James Jones	Simon Raven
Erich Maria Remarque	Marcel Proust
Len Deighton	John Rechy
Saki	Gore Vidal
Jack London	John Barth
James Hadley Chase	Alan Williams
Georgette Heyer	Bill Naughton
Rex Stout	John Horne Burns
Isaac Asimov	David Cate
Jules Verne	Ivan Turgenev
Hans Habe	Colin Wilson
Marquis de Sade	H.P. Lovecraft
Doris Lessing	Rachel Carson
Mary McCarthy	Jerzy Peterkiewicz
Edmund Wilson	Curzio Malaparte

The outrageousness of some of de Sade's works and two notorious scandals in which he was involved as a young man have given rise to his infamous reputation. He was without doubt a highly original, even extraordinary thinker. In *The Life and Ideas of the Marquis de Sade* Geoffrey Gorer has delved deep to present a succinct account of de Sade's strange life (one of the strangest ever lived) and has succeeded brilliantly in capturing the spirit of the man who has become the symbol of the pleasure in power and pain.

'There is no better introduction to de Sade'—*New Statesman*

'The best introduction for the general reader'—*Times Literary Supplement*

